The New Criterion

March 1992

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Notes & Comments, 1
Art & politics in Vichy France *by Hilton Kramer*, 4
Trollope today *by Roger Kimball*, 10
The legacy of John Wesley *by Jeffrey Hart*, 20
Mozart & the young *by Samuel Lipman*, 29
Penelope Fitzgerald *by Bruce Bawer*, 33
Jon Wiener's pop Marxism *by Ronald Radosh*, 43
Poems *by Donald Justice & Dick Allen*, 47

Letter from Paris: L'Etat culturel *by Katherine Knorr*, 51; **Art:** Gaston Lachaise *by Karen Wilkin*, 56; **Architecture:** Stern & Kahn *by Carter Wiseman*, 62; **Theater:** "Two Shakespearean Actors" *by Donald Lyons*, 65
Books: *Arnaldo Momigliano* The classical foundations of modern historiography *reviewed by Donald Kagan*, 67; *Katherine Duncan-Jones* Sir Philip Sidney: courtier poet *reviewed by James Bowman*, 71; *Margaret Fuller* "These sad but glorious days" *reviewed by Thomas Mallon*, 73; **Shorter notices** *by Christopher Carduff & David Gurevich*, 75; **Letters**, 79

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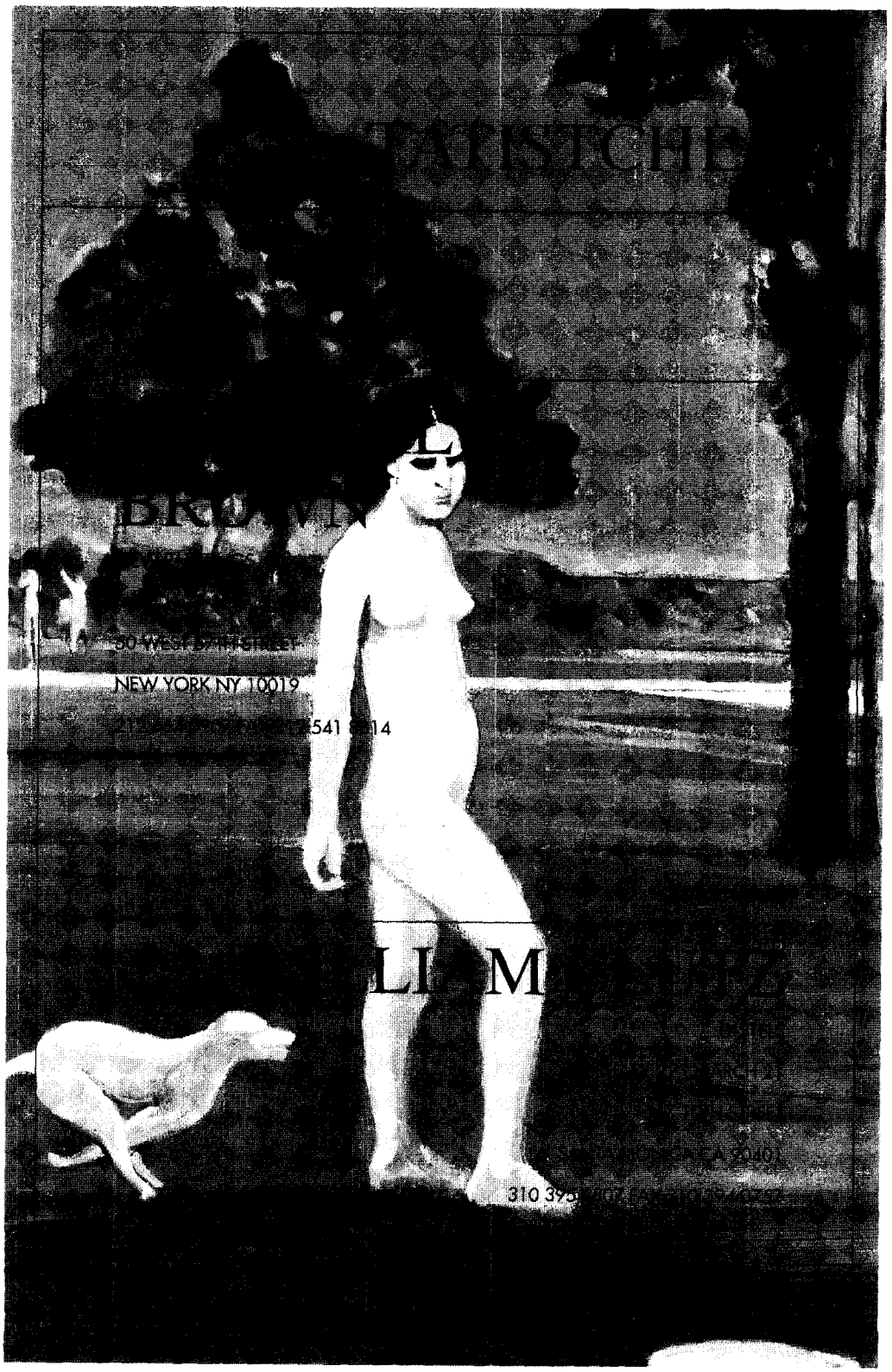

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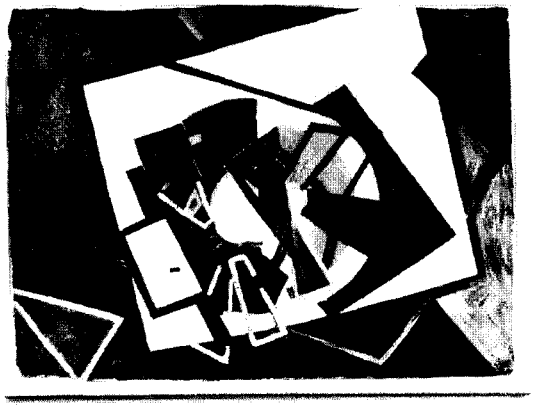

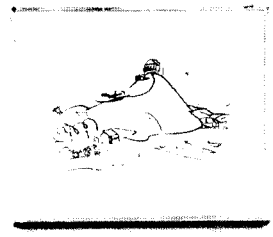

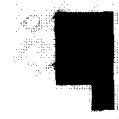

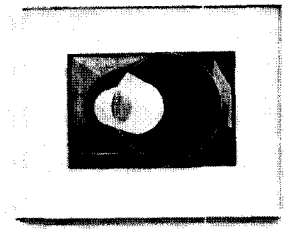

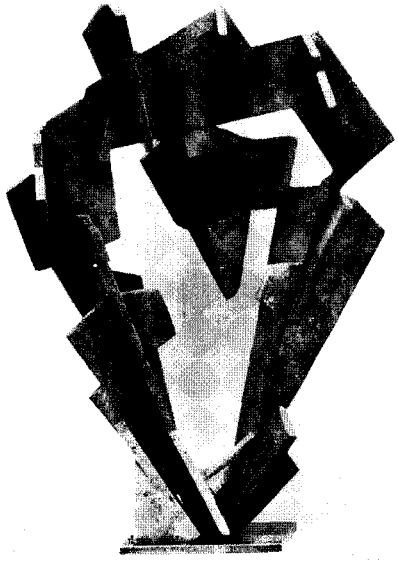

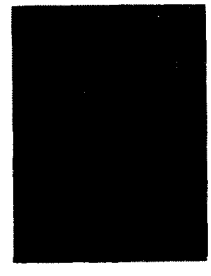

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The New Criterion *March 1992*

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Notes & Comments: March 1992

One cheer for Robert Hughes

The essay by Robert Hughes on "The Fraying of America" in the February 3 issue of *Time*—a preview, apparently, of his forthcoming book *The Culture of Complaint*—is in a number of important respects a welcome addition to the current national debate over political correctness, multiculturalism, and the assortment of related contentious issues that have now made the arts and the humanities in this country a fierce ideological battleground. On a wide range of issues that now dominate and demoralize American intellectual life—the fate that has befallen literary study, the cry for cultural separatism, and the accelerating vogue for mendacious revisionist history—Mr. Hughes has some very cogent things to say, and he says them with all the force of his customary apodictic style.

That he has come late to this cultural discussion—by our calculations, a decade late—does not make his critical observations any less welcome or any less relevant, though it is of course a sign of how much further our cultural situation has lately deteriorated that a writer such as Mr. Hughes, a liberal who would clearly have preferred to remain above the "fray" he now explores, has felt it imperative to address what is obviously a deepening national crisis.

Consider the following passages from "The Fraying of America":

On literary study:

> The world changes more deeply, widely, thrillingly than at any moment since 1917, perhaps since 1848, and the American academic left keeps fretting about how phallocentricity is inscribed in Dickens' portrayal of Little Nell.
>
> The canon, we're told, is a list of books by dead Europeans—Shakespeare and Dante and Tolstoy and Stendhal and John Donne and T. S. Eliot . . . you know, *them*, the pale, patriarchal penis people.

On multiculturalism:

> . . . you do not have to listen to the arguments [for multiculturalism] very long before realizing that, in quite a few people's minds, multiculturalism . . . means cultural separatism within the larger whole of America. They want to Balkanize culture.
>
> The separatism [that multiculturalism] fosters turns what ought to be a recognition of cultural diversity, or real multiculturalism, tolerated on both sides, into a pernicious symbolic program. Separatism is the opposite of diversity.

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On the rewriting of history:

> The Afrocentrist claim can be summarized quite easily. It says the history of the cultural relations between Africa and Europe is bunk —a prop for the fiction of white European supremacy. Paleohistorians agree that intelligent human life began in the Rift Valley of Africa. The Afrocentrist goes further: the African was the *cultural* father of us all. European culture derives from Egypt, and Egypt is part of Africa, linked to its heart by the artery of the Nile. . . . No plausible evidence exists for these claims of Egyptian negritude. . . . To plow through the literature of Afrocentrism is to enter a world of claims about technological innovation so absurd that they lie beyond satire, like those made for Soviet science in Stalin's time.
>
> Nowhere are the weaknesses and propagandistic nature of Afrocentrism more visible than in its version of slave history. Afrocentrists wish to invent a sort of remedial history in which the entire blame for the invention and practice of black slavery is laid at the door of Europeans. This is profoundly unhistorical, but it's getting locked in popular consciousness through the new curriculums. . . . But the African slave trade as such, the black traffic, was an Arab invention, developed by traders with the enthusiastic collaboration of black African ones, institutionalized with the most unrelenting brutality, centuries before the white man appeared on the African continent, and continuing long after the slave market in North America was finally crushed.

All these points have often been made before, though not always with as much rhetorical command as Mr. Hughes brings to their expression and only rarely by writers of a liberal persuasion. The fact of the matter is, that as this crisis has developed over the past decade, liberals have either supported the radicals in this cultural revolution or else kept their mouths firmly shut. If they spoke out at all, it was usually to attack conservatives and neoconservatives for their outspoken opposition to the accelerating Left-liberal cultural agenda.

This has indeed been Mr. Hughes's own record in this matter—a record of taking easy shots against the neoconservatives, some of whose criticisms he has now belatedly appropriated. While we welcome his conversion, we must nonetheless point out that the liberal habit of appeasing the extreme Left in these matters continues to afflict even so remarkable a performance as "The Fraying of America." Again and again in this essay Mr. Hughes attempts to situate his argument in some mythical "center" between the radicals and their critics—which is to say, between falsehood and truth—on the grounds, we can only suppose, of the misguided belief that liberals can allow themselves "no enemies on the Left."

No doubt it is for this reason that Mr. Hughes is still attacking "neoconservatives who rail against a bogey called multiculturalism" while going on elsewhere in the same essay, as we have seen, to attack this same "bogey" very energetically indeed. Why it should be OK for Robert Hughes to "rail against" a malevolent political assault on our culture in 1992 but somehow wrong to have engaged the issue at the outset, years ago, when the support of liberals like Mr. Hughes might have helped to stem the tide now threatening to overwhelm us—that is a question Mr. Hughes cannot bring himself to face. So he speaks instead of the radicals and their (premature?) critics as "two puritan sects, one masquerading as conservative, the other posing as revolutionary but using academic complaint as a way of evading engagement in the real world."

It is, alas, liberals like Robert Hughes who have been "evading engagement in the real world" of the cultural revolution that has been going on for some years now. We cheer his decision to enter the fray, and warn

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him that ill-judged attacks on those of us who have been fighting this fight for a decade are not going to shield him from the vituperation of the radical critics that now awaits him. They will teach him soon enough that the mythical middle ground on which he has attempted to conduct his argument has in fact been one of the casualties of the cultural revolution he has now belatedly attempted to address.

The artifice business

One of the more curious inquiries into contemporary life to be published in *The New York Times* in recent months was Paul Goldberger's article "25 Years of Unabashed Elitism," which appeared on the front page of the Sunday Arts & Leisure Section early in February. Ostensibly, the article was a tribute to the upscale couturier Ralph Lauren on the occasion of his award for Lifetime Achievement from the Council of Fashion Designers of America. In fact, it was an occasion for Mr. Goldberger—formerly the architectural critic of the *Times*, now its Cultural News Editor—to do a little musing on the subject of authenticity.

Is authenticity such a good thing, after all? Mr. Goldberger clearly has his doubts. "Perhaps the real question to ask is how much authenticity even matters anymore," he writes. "Is it an outdated idea in this age in which newness itself is not longer a compelling concept?" Now it would be difficult to think of a more Goldbergian gambit than this attempt to frame a discussion of authenticity around the work of a fashion designer—by definition, so to speak, someone who trades in the chic, the trendy, the ephemeral? "In an age in which artifice often seems to become reality," Mr. Goldberger writes, "Mr. Lauren has become the ultimate life-style purveyor, the ultimate producer of a completely packaged, perfect life."

Is Mr. Goldberger attacking this notion or extolling it? It is not always easy to say. He describes Ralph Lauren as an expert in "the artifice business" whose lavish emporia present us with "a grown-up Disneyland, a theme park for adults." This mention of Disneyland is perhaps the key to Mr. Goldberger's inquiry into the subject of authenticity, for we are reminded that the current Cultural News Editor of the *Times* made his debut many years ago in the paper with an article celebrating the design of Disneyland as the architectural model for the future. So we are probably on reasonably safe ground if we assume that Mr. Goldberger really does believe that authenticity is an "outmoded" concept, and that a "grown-up Disneyland" and the reduction of every cultural question to "life style" and "artifice" are OK things.

If this is indeed what Mr. Goldberger's article actually means, then we can glimpse some of the consequences in his own prose. What, for example, can it mean to say that Ralph Lauren's designs "are continually energized by a remarkable tension between awe and accessibility"? Just how can a pair of chinos—even a wildly expensive pair—illustrate this alleged "tension"? This is not criticism, and it isn't reporting. It is the journalistic equivalent of Muzak—or should we say Disneyland?

All this would be merely absurd if it were not for Mr. Goldberger's position on *The New York Times*, where the imperatives of "life style" have lately come to supplant the serious reporting of the news. Are we to conclude that in the *Times*'s cultural pages, as well as elsewhere in the paper, artifice is now to be given priority over authenticity in reporting? Mr. Goldberger concludes his bagatelle by asking whether "all this appealing artifice [is] wrong because it is too right—or is it right because nothing about it is ever wrong?" Is black white? Is truth a lie? Is the inauthentic the authentic? Is this a paradox —or the description of an editorial policy?

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Art & politics in the Vichy period

by Hilton Kramer

The generation to which I belong has a bad conscience.
—Marc Bloch, 1940

The fall of France to Hitler's army in the summer of 1940, besides marking a fateful turn in the military history of the Second World War, was an event of immense importance in the cultural life of the West. For as long as anyone could then remember, Paris had been the unrivaled art capital of the world. It was also its fashion capital, and for cultivated people in many countries it was the literary and intellectual capital as well. Wherever the spirit of modernist thought had cast its powerful spell, Paris loomed as a leader and a legend. Its ignominious surrender to the Nazi war machine was therefore received as something more than a political shock. It was taken to signify the end of a distinct and marvelous chapter in the history of our civilization.

In France itself, however, the response to this catastrophe was a good deal more complicated. It had always been a paradox that the most radical and far-reaching innovations of the modern movement had been produced in a country and a culture that were in so many respects hidebound by tradition and divided by deep and irreconcilable loyalties. Whereas the Paris avant-garde was famously internationalist in composition and cosmopolitan in outlook, France as a nation was largely neither. Its politics were xenophobic, its ecclesiastical institutions were reactionary, its educational system was rigidly conservative, and its official cultural life—as distinguished from avant-garde challenges to it—was organized in a way that made it all but mandatory to defer public recognition of the new and the unorthodox to the judgment of posterity. The achievements that had made Paris a symbol of advanced thought and artistic enlightenment to writers, artists, and intellectuals the world over were still looked upon in France itself with a good deal of hostility and suspicion. In the country where modernism had achieved its greatest artistic triumphs, the imperatives of modernity were often shunned and resisted where they were not openly condemned as something "decadent," alien, and evil.

France's collapse thus gave to these aggrieved and remorseless enemies of modernity an unexpected opportunity to impose upon their shattered nation something akin to the retrograde vision of its destiny which they had long harbored as a fantasy of correction and revenge. Owing to France's defeat, the momentum of history was on their side. With their Nazi conquerors, after all, they already shared many categorical antipathies. It required no campaign of persuasion by the Nazis to win the adherence of French fascists and their reactionary allies to a program designed to eradicate the influence—and in many cases the physical existence—of liberals, radicals, modernists, Jews, and others who were thought to represent the free-

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thinking cosmopolitan culture that was marked for extinction. With the country now cut off from the outside world, moreover, and Hitler's victory in the war looking more and more inevitable, the new order could be imposed without fear of reprisal or opprobrium.

Such, anyway, was the expectation of those who welcomed defeat as an opportunity for France to avenge all those assaults on its true destiny that had been made for so many years in the name of modernity, democracy, and free thought. Their mission came to be identified with the Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain, but a good many features of the new order—the central place it accorded to anti-Semitism, for example—were all but indistinguishable from the policies enforced by the Nazis. Yet France in the Vichy period was not, in its cultural life, exactly a mirror-image of Nazi Germany. Notwithstanding the censorship and prohibitions that were imposed under the Occupation, the French enjoyed a larger measure of freedom in cultural matters than was granted to any other nation under Nazi rule. This made it possible for some remarkable things to be achieved under difficult conditions, but it also left a heavy residue of guilt, denial, and bad conscience to be dealt with—or, what was more often the case, concealed, misrepresented, and even on occasion turned to advantage—once the war was over.

It is for this reason that what really happened to the life of art in Vichy France during the four years of the German conquest (1940-44) is not a subject that the French themselves have been eager to explore. Some things, of course, could not be denied—outright collaboration, for example—but it is nonetheless remarkable how quickly activities and alliances of real dishonor could be forgiven, if not forgotten, once the war had run its course and France had emerged—somewhat miraculously—as one of its victors. It was well known, to cite the most familiar examples, that certain artists—André Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck, Aristide Maillol, Charles Despiau, and Jean Cocteau, among a host of lesser talents—had made their obeisances to the Nazi cause when pressed to do so, yet their tarnished reputations caused only minor delay when it came to elevating them to honored positions in the pantheon of French culture.

On the other hand, it was a source of immense pride that the two greatest artists of the School of Paris—Picasso and Matisse—had remained at their posts, so to speak, without visible compromise, Picasso in Paris and Matisse in the south of France. Picasso even earned—on what basis it is still hard to know—a reputation of sorts as a figure in the Resistance, which Matisse rather envied. Yet Matisse was also greatly admired for the much-quoted statement he made in a letter to his son Pierre in New York in 1940. Writing from Nice on September 1 when it would still have been possible for him to leave, Matisse explained that as he was about to embark for Brazil to escape the Occupation, he had changed his mind. "It seemed to me as if I would be deserting," he wrote. "If everyone who has any value leaves France, what remains of France?"

This option was obviously closed to others, however. As Jews, Marc Chagall and Jacques Lipchitz knew very well what fate awaited them under Nazi rule, and so did a radical like André Breton. Their flight to America became part of the larger migration from Paris that played so large a role in the formation of the New York School in the early Forties. Yet the rivalry between the School of Paris and the New York School that emerged in the postwar years—a rivalry deeply resented in Paris—quickly became another obstacle to any really disinterested inquiry into the vicissitudes of French art under the Occupation. The pride of the nation, and the political myths needed to support it, were added to bad conscience to seal off the subject from critical scrutiny.

What has thus remained largely unknown, or at least unacknowledged—particularly in France—about the Vichy period are the actual details of French art life during the war years. This is a story that a new study of the

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period—*Artists Under Vichy* by Michèle C. Cone—has now attempted to bring us.[1] Cone is well placed by experience and vocation to carry out such a study. She was born in France in 1932, and has lived and worked in the United States for many years as an art critic and a teacher of art history. She knows the French scene well, she has interviewed many people who were involved in the French art world during the Vichy years, and she has turned up some interesting documents of the period. As a French Jew, moreover, Cone has a keen personal interest in the subject. Yet I have to confess to a certain disappointment in the book she has now devoted to it. *Artists Under Vichy* offers us a good deal of new information; it also casts some of the information already known to us in a new light. Yet there is a curious diffidence in this book—a refusal to believe the worst about people that the author is disposed to think well of—that weakens its account of a terrible period and immures the whole chronicle in a blandness that seems peculiarly inappropriate to the material. It is almost as if the author of *Artists Under Vichy* was reluctant to cause offense, particularly in regard to certain pieties—those, for example, generated by the myth of the Resistance.

What is in some respects most fascinating about the book is its account of the kind of specious normalcy that was so quickly established in the Paris art world under the Occupation. "On 6 August 1942," Cone writes, "the Musée National d'Art Moderne, a national institution run by Vichy's Ministry of Education and Youth, was hurriedly inaugurated in its new premises, a wing of the barely completed Palais de Tokyo." Whereas there were "no Picassos and no paintings by Pascin, Soutine, Modigliani, and other Ecole de Paris Jewish artists" in the inaugural show, and "no abstract art to be seen either," Cone writes, "Neo-impressionism, Symbolism, French-style Cubism, and particularly Fauvism were well represented (a lone Tanguy stood for French Surrealism)," and "six major pieces by Maillol greeted visitors in the entrance hall." Clearly, the Nazi campaign against "degenerate" art was significantly modified to accommodate the French.

Even earlier, in January 1941, six months after the fall of Paris to the Nazis, a group called Jeune Peintres Français et Leurs Maîtres was organized with the collaboration of Vichy officials. The painter Jean Bazaine was the head of its visual-arts section, and the writer Maurice Blanchot—later a cult figure of the intellectual Left in Paris—was an active participant in its affairs. Through Vichy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jeune France sent traveling exhibitions of contemporary French painting on a tour of Swiss cities in 1942-43 and another show to Madrid in 1943. At the same time, Cone writes, "The yearly Salon d'Automne—a venerable institution known for its early championship of the Fauves and for its cosmopolitanism—had not missed a beat."

> No sooner had the armistice been signed [Cone writes] than the directing committee, largely composed of men over the draft age, had begun looking for space since its habitual locale, the Grand Palais, had been requisitioned by the Germans. A wing of the Palais de Tokyo was made available to them. The Germans had been informed and, except for ordering that art by Jewish artists be removed, they had allowed the salon to open. Thereafter, the salon had functioned normally, if conservatively.

Indeed, it sometimes seems from Cone's account that there was more to be seen in the galleries and museums in Paris during the Occupation than there is to be seen today. By the end of 1941, Cone writes,

> the Orangerie, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and the Musée Galliéra had already held exhibitions; the Salon des Artistes Français, the Salon des Tuileries, the Salon d'Automne, and the Salon des Indépendants had made their annual

1 *Artists Under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution*, by Michèle C. Cone; Princeton University Press, 264 pages, $35.

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presentations at the Palais de Tokyo, and gallery activity had resumed. "Old galleries rival each other in activity. . . . All over the place new galleries arise," the critic writing for *Les Beaux Arts* noted in his 6 February 1942 survey. "In all corners of Paris the appearance of new galleries that plan to dedicate themselves to artists whose reputation is not yet established has been announced." Between 8 May 1941, the day the show called Jeunes Peintres de Tradition Française opened, and the fall of 1943, when Jean Fautrier had his retrospective at the Galerie Drouin, the number of galleries had practically doubled.

There were problems to be sure. "Picasso was prevented from showing his work under pressure from Franco's Spain" and "French artists who had left France were blacklisted by Vichy." And of course the ban on Jewish artists was strictly upheld. Yet the art scene clearly flourished:

> Among established members of the art world, Jean Cocteau, Aristide Maillol, Georges Rouault, Raoul Dufy, and Henri Matisse had solo exhibits at Galerie Carré: Cocteau in May, Matisse in November, Maillol in December 1941, Rouault in 1942, and Dufy in June 1943. Pierre Bonnard had shows at Pétridès in 1941 and in 1943, Maurice Utrillo in 1942, Othon Friesz in March 1943, and the naïf painter Bombois in February 1944. Georges Braque was the featured artist at the Salon d'Automne of 1943, and had an exhibition at the Galerie de France that year. Maurice de Vlaminck was on constant display in several galleries, including the new Galerie de l'Elysée. Utrillo, Vlaminck, André Derain, Maillol, and Charles Despiau showed in the group exhibitions of the Galerie Charpentier, which reopened in December 1941, revamped under the direction of M. Nasenta. Even Joan Miró, then living in Majorca, and Wassily Kandinsky, who lived in Paris, were on view at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher: Kandinsky in 1942 (21 July-4 August 1942) and again in a group show with Domela and Nicolas de Staël in 1944 (January-February 1944), Miró in 1943 (19 October-15 November 1943).

Thus, the commercial art galleries were going about their normal business. "Having opened on 8 February 1942," Cone writes, "the Galerie de France had made its mark during its first year . . . with an exhibition of early Fauve paintings and a retrospective of Jacques Villon . . . and one of Neoimpressionism. . . . In 1942, the gallery had shown the work of Marcel Duchamp's brother-in-law Jean Crotti, and of the sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon." It was in this period, too, that the gallery began exhibiting Bazaine, Estève, Lapicque, Manessier, Le Moal, Pignon, and other painters who became the favored talents of the postwar Paris art establishment.

One of the oddities of this very bizarre situation was that Fauvism, which at the time of the "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich in 1937 was still regarded by the Nazis as an example of the "decadent" art marked for destruction, was transformed less than five years later under the Occupation into a style eminently acceptable to all parties, both the Nazi censors and the French painters, critics, and dealers who were eager to pursue their careers under Nazi rule. While the French deluded themselves into believing that the revival of Fauvism and Fauvist-derived new art would strike a blow for French artistic honor and thus serve, perhaps, as an instrument of Resistance, the Germans were persuaded that it represented what Cone calls "a dynamic fascistic force against world decadence." She is referring here to arguments put forward at the time by the French critic Gaston Diehl, and it is altogether typical of Michèle Cone's diffidence that the harshest term she can summon in judging this specious line of argument is "naïve."

How is this "leniency of German censorship toward the Fauves," as Cone calls it, to be explained? One explanation, which she duly reports, is Hitler's remark to Albert Speer: "Are we to be concerned with the intellectual soundness of the French people? Let them degenerate if they want to! All the better for us." Yet Cone seems to me to miss

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the point here in believing that "what Hitler meant by degenerate art" was art that was "worthless as anti-Nazi propaganda." My own reading of Hitler's policy in France under the Occupation is that he understood very well how little it would take to keep the French in line as long as the Nazis appeared to be victorious in the war. Was Hitler wrong in this judgment? Hardly. The French showed little reluctance and no real opposition to what was called the "Aryanization" of the Paris art world—and indeed, of French cultural life as a whole. According to Cone, "In order to exhibit at the Salon d'Automne . . . artists routinely signed the humiliating register, stating that they were French and not Jewish. A similar procedure applied in all French administrations." The Nazis encountered few problems in implementing their goal of a "Judenrein" art world in France, and there was never any shortage of Frenchmen ready to take financial advantage of this policy. This, too, became part of the specious normalcy of the Paris art scene under the Occupation, and who can doubt that it would very likely have remained the normal way of doing things if the war had turned out differently?

Another example of the conspicuously lenient policies of the Nazis under the Occupation was its "soft" treatment—the word is Cone's—of Picasso. It has already been noted that "Picasso was prevented from showing his work under pressure from Franco's Spain." Yet Cone reports that "Picasso produced between three and four hundred paintings, plus large numbers of drawings, prints, and sculpture, during the Occupation years." Which, if nothing else, suggests that he was never unduly incommoded in this period. As far as we know, no attempt was ever made by the Franco regime to have the artist who gave the world *Guernica* repatriated to Spain, though the painting and Picasso's other activities on behalf of the Spanish Republic had made him an international symbol of opposition to the fascist cause. "Did he receive guarantees of safety as long as he did not exhibit his work?" Cone asks. The answer is clearly affirmative, though exactly where the guarantees came from is a question never energetically pursued, and may indeed be unanswerable. Cone cites André-Louis Dubois, who worked in the Paris prefecture—the French police, in other words—and who claimed to have visited Picasso almost daily for five years, sometimes protecting him from the Gestapo. But would the French police have been in a position to overrule the Gestapo if its policy had really been directed against Picasso?

Cone never deals with such matters in any satisfactory way. She mentions the German sculptor Arno Breker—Hitler's favorite—whom she interviewed for her book, for he, too, claimed to have protected Picasso. Yet she shies away from quoting, or even making a reference to, Breker's boast about his role in saving Picasso that is quoted at length in David Pryce-Jones's *Paris in the Third Reich*. The relevant passage from Pryce-Jones's earlier interview with Breker reads as follows:

> Hitler's visit to Paris changed my standing. I was forty on July 19, 1940. That day I was invited to lunch at the Chancellory, and after lunch Hitler gave me the Golden Badge of the Party. The whole of his entourage saw what a part I played in his life. And then he was astonished by the success of my exhibition [in Paris], and very proud. For him this was a certificate that he had found his best artist. Himmler noticed it. I told his aide that if ever an artist was in difficulty I would look after the matter. So I could address myself to General [Heinrich] Müller, head of the Gestapo. By that means I got Dina Vierny freed; she was sixteen or seventeen, a Russian Jew and mistress of Maillol. I was on very good terms with them. It was the same with many others. Including Picasso. I brought up the subject with Müller in the Gestapo headquarters at the Albrechtstrasse. Picasso had been sending money to Russia via the Scandinavian countries. Cocteau had telephoned me to save him, saying I had to do something—Picasso was frightened. I knew his character—he was a great coward, he had the wind up. If the police

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were to lay hands on him, he might give up the ghost. I said to Müller that such a man could not be allowed to die, and that if he would not help, then I would ring up the Chancellory and tell the story there. That changed matters. He rang up Paris and gave orders to stop all activity against Picasso.[2]

Did any of this really happen? Apparently Picasso was sending money to Spanish exiles then living in the Soviet Union, and they would have been Spanish Communists (for Stalin wasn't in the habit of harboring social democrats), and this was indeed likely to cause trouble for him.[2] But we cannot know if Breker, who was very friendly with Cocteau and his circle, was telling the truth, a half-truth, or just concocting a story to make himself look good after the war. Michèle Cone makes a big point of also having interviewed Breker, but we get nothing like the story in David Pryce-Jones's interview from her account. She duly reports on the many friendly visits Picasso received from prominent Germans—including that of Gerhardt Heller, the Nazis' official literary censor in Paris, who was brought to the painter's studio by no less an eminence than Jean Paulhan. And she reports, too, on the sales of Picasso's work that regularly took place from the studio and through friendly dealers despite the public ban on exhibitions, a subject that Picasso was less than honest about after the Liberation. The myth of his Resistance work is also pretty much laid to rest. Yet the chapter on "Picasso's War in Occupied Paris" in *Artists Under Vichy* never has a real moral focus, and too often takes refuge in descriptions of the iconography of the paintings the artist produced when what is wanted is an account of the specific circumstances in which they were produced. Where, for example, did the materials for Picasso's immense wartime oeuvre come from? It would be interesting to know.

The best thing in *Artists Under Vichy* is its account of the way the traditional activities of the Paris art world continued to function virtually without interruption under Nazi rule, for without ever spelling it out Cone makes it abundantly clear that it was during the Occupation that the general shape and spirit of the postwar Paris art world were set. A good deal of the political bad faith that dominated the Vichy period simply took another form when artists who had found it convenient to accommodate themselves to the conditions of the Occupation found it equally convenient in the postwar years to accommodate themselves to the imperatives of Soviet foreign policy. In that shameful complicity with the myth of Stalinist virtue Picasso once again played an important role—but that is a story that lies beyond the boundaries of *Artists Under Vichy.* My point is that the politics of the postwar Paris art world cannot be understood in isolation from our comprehension of what happened under the Occupation.

But this is true of France as a whole and not only of its art life. What happened in the Vichy period determined almost everything that took place in France once the war was over, which was why so many mendacious myths—about the Occupation, the Resistance, and the Liberation—were needed in the postwar period. As it happens, an illuminating study of these myths and the role they have played in French political life from the Occupation down to the present day has just been published—Henry Rousso's *The Vichy Syndrome.*[3] Unfortunately, Michèle Cone's *Artists Under Vichy* was published too soon to benefit from this important study, and as a result its account of the Vichy period is more often a reflection of the kind of programmatic distortion that Henry Rousso so skillfully anatomizes than it is a truly critical examination of what actually occurred in that shameful period.

2 *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940-1944*, by David Pryce-Jones; Holt, Rinehart & Winston (1981), page 220.

3 *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, by Henry Rousso, translated from the French by Arthur Goldhammer; Harvard University Press, 384 pages, $37.50.

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A novelist who hunted the fox: Anthony Trollope today

by Roger Kimball

Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring, real good is always new, marvellous, intoxicating. "Imaginative literature," therefore, is either boring or immoral or a mixture of both.
—Simone Weil

Of all the great nineteenth-century novelists, perhaps none has suffered more from the obloquy of intellectuals than Anthony Trollope. Writing recently in the London *Sunday Telegraph*, the English academic John Casey expressed dismay that the current Prime Minister of England should exhibit a fondness for Trollope's novels. Flaunting the spectacle of "that deadly thing—a Trollopian," Professor Casey assured his readers that "Trollope is overrated. His prose, adequate enough for his purposes, is undistinguished. His physical descriptions are flat. You rarely *see* anything vividly through his writing." Moreover, Professor Casey added, "most confirmed Trollopians do not much like literature." Doubtless Mr. Major was suitably chastened.

Such strictures have dogged Trollope from the beginning. Trollope has no "ideas"; he is too "comfortable"; his novels, with their abundance of clerics and happy endings, are insufficiently dramatic, passionate, challenging. Thomas Carlyle, than whom a less Trollopian figure can scarcely be imagined, sneered that the novelist was "irredeemably embedded in the commonplace, and grown fat upon it." And Henry James—in his own, very different, way as un-Trollopian as Carlyle—dismissed *The Belton Estate* (1866) as "a work written for children; a work prepared for minds unable to think; . . . a *stupid* book." "Life is vulgar," James wrote in another early essay on Trollope, "but we know not how vulgar it is till we see it set down in his pages." In the handful of pieces that he wrote about Trollope in the 1860s, James allowed himself a certain admiration—Trollope was, he admitted, a "born story-teller"—but the admiration was always hedged with disparaging qualifications: Trollope's work was essentially "superficial," his dramatic situations "trivial." If he felt an undeniable "partiality" for Trollope's novels, he was nonetheless "somewhat ashamed" of that partiality.

James later responded more warmly to Trollope's achievement, placing him below Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot, to be sure, yet insisting that "he belonged to the same family" as that great triumvirate of Victorian writers. What had changed was not so much James's judgment about the character of Trollope's work—Trollope must ever lack Jamesian "seriousness"—but his recognition that work of such character was nothing to be ashamed of. "His great, his inestimable merit," James wrote in an appreciative retrospective essay published shortly after Trollope's death in 1882, "was a complete appreciation of the usual."

Trollope's own estimation of his achieve-

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ment jibed closely with James's final assessment. He, too, reckoned his place below that of George Eliot and Thackeray. And although he did not particularly care for Dickens or for his work, he acknowledged Dickens's dazzling success. "The primary object of a novelist is to please," Trollope wrote in his posthumously published *Autobiography* (1883); "and this man's novels have been found more pleasant than those of any other writer." Trollope would probably also have agreed with James that his own forte consisted in depicting "the commonplace." "A novel," Trollope wrote, "should give a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos." As N. John Hall points out in his thorough new biography of the novelist,[1] Trollope's "genius, while capable of depicting tragic figures, was essentially a comic one." Even his grimmest work, *The Way We Live Now* (1875), ends with a quartet of marriages and general reconciliation. The evil financier Augustus Melmotte, although he comes a cropper and commits suicide, emerges with a certain dignity; many critics have remarked on the "Roman" trappings of his suicide. The other bad eggs are sent packing to the continent or America. Harmony and happiness reign anew.

It is part of Trollope's achievement to have managed this without seeming sappy. His characters are generally decorous, but never prim, unless for comic effect. This is the other, more positive side of that "commonplace" Carlyle disparaged. As Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of Trollope's early admirers, put it in a well-known encomium, Trollope's work is "written on the strength of beef and through the inspiration of ale, and [is] just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were being made a show of." George Eliot, who professed as great an admiration for Trollope's work as he did for hers (and who credited Trollope's example with helping her to persevere with *Middlemarch*), remarked in a letter that his books "are filled with belief in goodness without the slightest tinge of maudlin." What we might call the *easiness* of Trollope's novels is all the more remarkable in view of his frankly didactic ambition. "I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons," he notes in the *Autobiography*. The central question an author must ask himself, he reflects later, is "how shall he teach lessons of virtue and at the same time make himself a delight to his readers?" Trollope never provided anything much in the way of theoretical answers to this (or any other) question. But his life and, especially, his dozens of novels stand as eloquent testimony to the strength and, finally, the complexity of his moral vision. At a moment when art seems often to flaunt its distance from virtue as conventionally understood, Trollope's example may provide a welcome perspective not only on contemporary fiction but also, as Trollope put it in one of his most famous titles, on the way we live now.

Today, at any rate, the reaction against the creator of Barsetshire and Plantagenet Palliser is probably easier to understand than is his enduring popularity.[2] Tolstoy exclaimed that "Trollope kills me, kills me with his virtuosity." But there can be few writers of Trollope's stature less calculated to appeal to twentieth-century notions—

1 *Trollope: A Biography*, by N. John Hall; Oxford University Press, 581 pages, $30.

2 And there can be no doubt that his popularity is enduring. Not only does Trollope continue to be much in demand among readers but he has provided attractive provender for numerous books. Apart from myriad critical studies—among which James R. Kincaid's *The Novels of Anthony Trollope* (1977) deserves special mention—the last twenty years have seen the publication of a biography by James Pope Hennessy (1971) and an illustrated "appreciation" by C.P. Snow (1975), as well as Robert Super's *The Chronicler of Barset: A Life of Anthony Trollope* (1988) and Richard Mullen's *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in his World* (1990). According to Professor Hall, another biography, by Victoria Glendinning, is on the way.

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what are still, after all our ironies and disillusionments, essentially Romantic notions—of artistic privilege and authorial preciousness.

For one thing, there was Trollope's politics. He described himself as an "advanced" "Conservative-Liberal." But such terms meant something rather different in the second half of the nineteenth century from what they've come to mean in the second half of the twentieth. One token of Trollope's distance from contemporary pieties is his view of women. While his cast of clever, spirited women is rightly regarded as one of his most sympathetic achievements, Trollope is not exactly what one would call a feminist. What is a woman's goal in life, he asks in *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864). It is to fall in love, marry the man, have two children, and "live happily ever afterwards."

Also calculated to displease was Trollope's attitude toward the whole notion of artistic "inspiration," which he regarded with undisguised scorn. "To me," he wrote, "it would not be more absurd if the shoemaker were to wait for inspiration." What mattered to Trollope was application. His discipline was legendary. According to the famous story recounted in the *Autobiography*, he paid his groom £5 a year extra to wake him at 5:00 A.M. so that he could be at his desk by 5:30. "I do not know that I ought not to feel that I owe more to him than to any one else for the success I have had," Trollope reflected. "By beginning at that hour, I could complete my literary labor before I dressed for breakfast."

Nor did Trollope dawdle and "sit nibbling the pen." He spent half an hour reading over and correcting what he had written the day before. Then, with a clock in front of him, he managed 250 words every quarter hour, covering ten pages and producing on average 2,500 words before he set off for a full day's work on Post Office business. His manuscripts suggest that he did virtually no rewriting. Following this regimen, he generally wrote about 10,000 words a week, on some occasions as much as 25,000 words. And this was week in and week out, month after month, year after year. In other words, Trollope exhibited in spades the Victorian belief in the transformative power of work. "[I]t's a sheer matter of industry," he declared. "It's not the head that does it—it's the cobbler's wax on the seat and the sticking to my chair!" Trollope admitted that his procedure might not conduce to works of genius. But, he explains, "the idea that I was the unfortunate owner of unappreciated genius never troubled me." Punctuality was of supreme importance to him. "With all the pages that I have written for magazines I have never been a day late," Trollope remarks proudly, "nor have I ever caused inconvenience by sending less or more matter than I had stipulated to supply. But I have sometimes found myself compelled to suffer by the irregularity of others." Even in this age of word processors and modems, I daresay that there are few writers who can make that worthy boast.

Trollope's working diaries, in which he jotted down the number of pages he wrote each day, show days missed for illness, holidays, and other engagements, but such lacunae are rare. He could write almost anywhere: not only at his desk but also on the railway (he had a special traveling desk built for this purpose) and on shipboard. Once he became an established writer, he was in the habit of going down to consult with the ship's carpenter in order to arrange for suitable writing accommodations before setting sail. Traveling from New York to London in 1875, Henry James recalled meeting Trollope on board. "The season was unpropitious," James wrote,

> the vessel overcrowded, the voyage detestable; but Trollope shut himself up in his cabin every morning for a purpose which, on the part of a distinguished writer who was also an invulnerable sailor, could only be communion with the muse. He drove his pen as steadily on the tumbling ocean as in Montagu Square.

James supposed that Trollope was working on yet another novel; in fact, he was just then beginning his autobiography.

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Thinking about Trollope encourages the habit of tabulation. His first book, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, was published in 1847 as Trollope approached his thirty-second birthday. "The book," as Professor Hall notes, "did not sell," even when the publisher vainly resorted to advertisements attributing authorship to Trollope's mother, by then a popular novelist in her own right. Trollope's first, albeit exceedingly modest, success came with *The Warden* in 1855. *The Warden*, which inaugurated the Barsetshire series and is widely regarded as one of Trollope's masterpieces, was Trollope's fourth book; *Barchester Towers*, probably the most popular of all his novels, came next, in 1857. Over the next quarter century, he produced some sixty-five books. Altogether forty-seven novels and nearly twenty volumes of travel writing, short stories, criticism, and biography, including a book on Caesar's *de Bello Gallico* (1870) and a life of Cicero (1880), flowed from his pen. Nor were Trollope's novels skimpy two-hundred-page entertainments. *The Warden* appeared in a single, relatively slender volume; but most of his novels were published serially in magazines, appearing between covers only when they had grown into full-fledged, triple-decker productions. *The Way We Live Now*, his longest book, is well over four hundred thousand words long.

Such fertility, combined with what Trollope himself called "mechanical" habits of composition, engenders first astonishment and then suspicion. As early as 1858, contemporary reviewers wondered whether Trollope were not writing too much, whether the "rapid multiplication of his progeny," as the *Saturday Review* put it, must not require a corresponding diminution of quality. Since then it has been a standard, if not adequately examined, assumption that Trollope sacrificed quality to quantity—something, we are given to understand, no serious artist would think of doing.

Then there was Trollope's attitude toward money. Like most authors, he liked it. Unlike many, he frankly admitted that he wrote for it. Moreover, he kept as meticulous tabs on his earnings as he did on his writing, reproducing at the end of the *Autobiography* the sums he received for each of his books through 1879. The total was £68,939 17*s.* 5*d.*, a result that Trollope described as "comfortable" but not "splendid." (According to Professor Hall, the total at the time of his death three years later was some £10,000 more.) He comments caustically that "authors are told that they should disregard payment for their work, and be content to devote their unbought brains to the welfare of the public. Brains that are unbought will never serve the public much. Take away from English authors their copyrights, and you would very soon take away also from England her authors."

More generally, Trollope tended to agree with Dr. Johnson that a man is never so innocently employed as when he is making money. In *Can You Forgive Her?*, the first of the six Palliser novels, Plantagenet Palliser remarks that "there is no vulgar error so vulgar,—that is to say, common or erroneous,—as that by which men have been taught to say that mercenary tendencies are bad. A desire for wealth is the source of all progress. Civilization comes from what men call greed."

Dowries, legacies, "expectations," church livings, and financial speculation play as large a role in the lives of Trollope's characters as they did in the lives of the people Trollope observed in his travels around the British Isles. Not all his characters are mercenary; few, not even the saintly Septimus Harding in *The Warden*, are blind to the importance of money in affecting life's possibilities. "Of all novelists in any country," W. H. Auden remarked in "A Poet of the Actual," his aptly titled review of James Pope Hennessy's biography of the novelist, "Trollope best understands the role of money. Compared with him, even Balzac is too romantic." One of Trollope's most famous characters is the appalling Mrs. Proudie, wife and faithful tormentor of Dr. Proudie, Bishop of Barchester. Mrs. Proudie is a frightful busybody and scheming har-

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ridan, the real force behind the bishop's throne. Yet she is not stupid, nor is she entirely without feeling. In *Barchester Towers*, Mrs. Proudie arranges—well, she connives and maneuvers—for the poor and beleaguered Mr. and Mrs. Quiverful, who have fourteen children ("fourteen *living*," as Mrs. Quiverful plaintively puts it), to receive a church position that will double their income.[3] Mrs. Proudie's beneficence was far from wholly altruistic: she was pursuing her own political objectives as much as she was aiding the distressed curate and his fruitful wife. But while Mrs. Quiverful understands some of this and rightly regards Mrs. Proudie as "stiff and hard and proud as piecrust," she nevertheless concludes that the bishop's wife is "right at bottom." Trollope notes dryly that "people when they get their income doubled usually think that those through whose instrumentality this little ceremony is performed are right at bottom."

But it was not only Trollope's severely pragmatic attitude toward his literary endeavors (how he would have loathed the term "creative writing"!) that sets him apart from the idealized image of literary culture; nor was it simply his candid acknowledgment that money constituted an important spur to writing; there was also his whole mode of life. Contrasting Trollope with such "sedentary" French novelists as Flaubert and Zola, James described Trollope, not *altogether* nastily, as "a novelist who hunted the fox." And indeed, among the three chief occupations of Trollope's life—writing novels, working for the British Post Office, and "hunting the fox"—writing certainly came in third. "Nothing has ever been allowed to stand in the way of hunting," Trollope declared, "neither the writing of books, nor the work of the Post Office, nor other pleasures." From the time that he could afford it, in the 1840s, Trollope habitually rode to hounds three times weekly for the entire season, November through April. Although increasingly heavy and dangerously near-sighted—Trollope never rode particularly well—he did not give up the sport until 1876 when he was sixty-one.

It would be also a mistake to think that Trollope regarded his position at the Post Office as a sinecure. He had an absolute horror of seeming to receive public money without earning it. As he often took pains to point out, he devoted vastly more time and energy to his career as a civil servant, which lasted from 1834 until September of 1867, than he did to his writing. He prosecuted his job as Surveyor for the British Post Office with unflagging energy. He probably logged more miles riding over Ireland (where he spent more than fifteen years) and England to investigate complaints and improve service than any other individual. "I became intensely anxious," he noted, "that people should have their letters delivered to them punctually." It is characteristic that some of his most critical remarks about the United States concern its postal system, whose service he described as "absolutely barbarous." In any event, if Trollope's novels can be said to lack innovation, not so his work for the Post Office. Probably his most important innovation came in 1851, when he proposed erecting letter boxes (which were already being used in France) to make the collection of mail more convenient and efficient. By the mid-1850s, letter boxes were in widespread use in Britain. Not only did Trollope work at the Post Office for more than thirty years, but long after he had become a successful writer he applied for a position that he knew would sharply curtail his literary activities. His disappointment on not receiving the job was intense. When he resigned a couple of years later, the rebuff still rankled.

3 "Quiverful"? Alas, yes. Among others one encounters in Trollope's pages are Dr. Pessimist Anticant (a crude caricature of Carlyle), Mr. Popular Sentiment (Dickens), the rich parvenu Sir Damask Monogram, a musician named Blowhard, and a doctor named Fillgrave. Sometimes such fanciful names are amusing; sometimes, one feels that Trollope was not as subtle as he might have been in naming his characters.

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The fact is, Trollope strove mightily to embody the nebulous ideal epitomized in the word "gentleman"—what the critic James Kincaid called "the most common standard for moral behaviour in Trollope." Fox hunting could clearly be accommodated by this standard, as indeed, for Trollope, could a career in the civil service. An excessive devotion to writing novels was perhaps more problematic. In the event, Trollope's effort to join these activities under the rubric "gentleman" was not accomplished seamlessly. As W. H. Auden pointed out, Trollope was "a very eccentric character who might well, though he would have hated to admit it, have come straight out of a novel by Dickens." Contemporary recollections of the novelist are pretty much of a piece. Trollope was a bluff, kind-hearted, slightly uncouth man, rough, sociable, and above all loud. James Russell Lowell recalls meeting Trollope in Boston. "Dined the other day with Anthony Trollope; a big, redfaced, rather underbred Englishman of the bald-with-spectacles type. A good roaring positive fellow who deafened me . . . till I thought of Dante's Cerberus."

The relation between this comic, whist-playing monster and the delicate delineator of nineteenth-century English manners is perhaps difficult to fathom until we recognize that in addition to being bluff Trollope was painfully shy and fundamentally lonely. The nineteenth century was full of famously unhappy childhoods; but few were memorialized with as much quiet pathos as Trollope brought to the memory of his early wretchedness. "My boyhood was, I think," he writes at the beginning of his *Autobiography,* "as unhappy as that of a young gentleman could well be."

Trollope's father, Thomas Anthony, was an intelligent though failed barrister who suffered from migraines and a foul temper. He was modestly prosperous when Trollope was born, in 1815, the fifth of seven children. But by the time young Anthony went to school, his father was well on his way to the poverty and unshakable depression that dogged him for the rest of his life. "Everything went wrong with him," Trollope noted sadly of his father. "The touch of his hand seemed to create failure." After he had driven away all his clients and failed thoroughly in his attempt to farm, Trollope *père* turned to compiling an *Encyclopedia Ecclesiastica*, meant to define all the ecclesiastical terms that had ever existed. It was the perfect vehicle to complete his futility. By the time he died he had gotten to the letter D.

In Trollope's early years, however, Thomas Anthony was still cogent enough to oversee his children's education. "From my very babyhood," Trollope recalled,

> I had to take my place alongside of him as he shaved at six o'clock in the morning, and say my early rules from the Latin Grammar, or repeat the Greek alphabet; and was obliged at these early lessons to hold my head inclined towards him, so that in the event of guilty fault, he might be able to pull my hair without stopping his razor or dropping his shaving-brush. No father was ever more anxious for the education of his children, though I think none ever knew less how to go about the work.

Trollope's real misery began when, like his older brothers Thomas Adolphus and Henry, he was sent as a day boy to Harrow. The Trollopes' poverty had taken firm hold by the time young Anthony matriculated, and he was ragged mercilessly by his fellow students. "I suffered horribly!" Trollope writes. "I was big, and awkward, and ugly, and, I have no doubt, skulked about in a most unattractive manner. Of course I was ill dressed and dirty." Nor did the young Trollope find much solace among the masters; he was a poor student, irremediably slovenly and remiss in his studies. Trollope recalls encountering Dr. Butler, headmaster at Harrow, who would stop him in the street and ask whether it was possible that Harrow should be disgraced by so dirty and unkempt a boy. "He must have known me," Trollope remarks, "for he was in the habit of flogging me constantly. Perhaps he did not recognize me by my face."

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Trollope's mother, Frances, was the antipode of his father: bright, sociable, and like Anthony graced with extraordinary energy. It was she who pulled the family through after all her husband's nostrums collapsed. Not that Frances was exactly a practical woman. She hit upon one of her most notorious schemes when making a protracted visit to the States (leaving poor Anthony alone in the "care" of his father). With a combination of capital that she could ill-afford to spend and credit she could not repay, she built a bazaar in Cincinnati, stocked with the tawdry trinkets her husband insisted on sending her from England. "[W]ithin half a year the building was put into receivership," Professor Hall notes; "everything, even Mrs. Trollope's own belongings, was seized."

And yet, the sojourn in America was not entirely wasted, for it sparked her own career as a writer. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, a wry and caustic account of American foibles, was published in 1832 when Mrs. Trollope was fifty-three. It instantly became a *succès de scandal*, immensely popular in Britain, loudly detested in the States. While the money she made from *Domestic Manners* staved off disaster for only a couple of years, it did provide her with a vocation and a means to feed her family. From that moment forward she was a writer, turning out with extraordinary fluency a prodigious number of novels and travel books, even as she nursed her sick husband and children, four of whom were eventually to die of consumption. She continued writing until 1856, when she was seventy-six, producing all told over one hundred volumes. "Her career," Trollope remarks, "offers great encouragement to those who have not begun early in life, but are still ambitious to do something before they depart hence."

Despite Mrs. Trollope's efforts, the bailiff continued to threaten. Finally, in March 1834, he could be put off no longer: the family fled to Bruges to escape creditors. Mrs. Trollope managed to secure a teaching position for Anthony, but within a few months a vacancy opened up in the General Post Office in London. In the autumn of 1834, he started work as a clerk for £90 per year. Trollope's early years at the Post Office were not a success. His salary was inadequate, so he was always in debt; his work was poor, his habits irregular, his attitude obstreperous. He was several times on the verge of being dismissed.

But then, in 1841, he applied for and was appointed to the position of Deputy Postal Surveyor in King's County, Ireland. Somehow, Ireland changed everything. Poverty, ignominy, loneliness: all were suddenly banished. "From the day on which I set my foot in Ireland all these evils went away from me," Trollope recalled. "Since that time, who has had a happier life than mine?" Within a year, he was engaged to Rose Heseltine, a quiet Englishwoman he met at a watering place near Dublin and whom he married in 1844. Not only did he pursue his new postal duties avidly, to the astonishment of his superiors in London, but he finally set about realizing his dream of becoming a writer, beginning work on *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* in 1843.

It was a dream that he had cultivated carefully since childhood. Partly in an effort to relieve his loneliness, Trollope had early on fallen into the habit of daydreaming. "Thus it came to pass," he confided in the *Autobiography*, "that I was always going about with some castle in the air firmly built within my mind."

> For weeks, for months, if I remember rightly, from year to year, I would carry on the same tale, binding myself down to certain laws, . . . I myself was of course my own hero. Such is a necessity of castle-building. . . . There can, I imagine, hardly be a more dangerous mental practice; but I have often doubted whether, had it not been my practice, I should ever have written a novel. I learned in this way to maintain an interest in a fictitious story, to dwell on a work created by my own imagination, and to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life.

By the late 1840s, Trollope's daydreams had

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begun to take on a semblance of reality; by the late 1850s, he might as well have stepped out of the pages of one of his novels: the final installments of the romance had begun, and early sufferings and complications were resolved in neat if homely harmonies.

In fact, many commentators have wondered whether the picture that Trollope presents in the *Autobiography* isn't a little too neat: whether the childhood miseries were quite as severe or the later triumphs quite so unruffled as Trollope presents. While Professor Hall corrects a few dates and other minor lapses, he does not argue substantially with the self-portrait with which Trollope provides us in the *Autobiography*. Indeed, for those familiar with the *Autobiography* none of the recent biographies of Trollope offers much in the way of revelation. This can hardly be a criticism, perhaps, since there are precious few revelations about Trollope to be had. Some youthful indiscretions are hinted at in the *Autobiography*. There was a bit of drinking and the occasional sticky romantic entanglement. (Trollope recounts an episode in which one girl's mother marched into the Post Office, basket on her arm, loudly demanding to know when Anthony Trollope was going to marry her daughter.)

But Trollope tells his own story with as much decorum as he brings to his novels. What he presents is not the record of his inner life but a chronicle of his endeavors. His discussion of his marriage is a case in point: "My marriage was like the marriage of other people, and of no special interest to anyone except my wife and me." Professor Hall, like Trollope's other biographers, cannot do much better. About Rose, for example, he tells us simply that "she remains the great unknown in Trollope's life." Apparently, it was the same for Trollope's friends. George Henry Lewes, having spent a night at the Trollopes' house in 1861, wrote in his journal that "Mrs Trollope did not make any decided impression on me, one way or the other." And it was the same, too, for many other aspects of Trollope's life. Discussing *The Small House at Allington* (1864)—the fifth of the six Barsetshire novels—Professor Hall notes that the hero, Johnny Eames, was hopelessly in love with the inaccessible Lily Dale. Both in *The Small House at Allington* and in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), Eames is recognizably a self-portrait of the young Trollope. (Mrs. Oliphant said that she could not read Trollope's book on Caesar without laughing: "It is so like Johnny Eames.") But, Professor Hall concedes, "whether there was ever a Lily Dale in Trollope's early life, a woman he worshipped for years but, for whatever reason, could never win, is beyond discovery."

"Beyond discovery," as it happens, describes almost everything of importance about Trollope's life that is not contained in his *Autobiography*. This means that a biographer, especially one coming on the heels of several recent accounts of the novelist's life, labors at a marked disadvantage. What will infuse his redaction with new life and interest? Professor Hall, who teaches English at Bronx Community College and who has edited an edition of Trollope's letters (1983), has probably done as well as one could have hoped. He has brought the habits of a meticulous scholar as well as the passion of an enthusiast to his task. His book proceeds in deliberate steps through every important episode of Trollope's life, taking us from Trollope's unhappy school days through his place at the heart of literary London. He dutifully recounts the signal events of Trollope's career, his rise in the Post Office, the publication of his books, his association with the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and *Saint Pauls Magazine*, and his failed bid to win a seat in Parliament; he has sifted through contemporary reviews and provides a kind of running score card on Trollope's popularity; he follows him as eagerly to America, Australia, and South Africa as to the Garrick Club, the Cosmopolitan Club, and the Athenaeum. Above all, perhaps, he stresses the fundamental Trollopian achievement: that "no one is thor-

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oughly virtuous or thoroughly evil, and Trollope engages a qualified sympathy for almost everyone."

Professor Hall also reminds us of just how droll Trollope's *Autobiography* can be. For example, passing through Salt Lake City in 1872, Trollope recounts his brief encounter with Brigham Young. Having sent up his card, he waits to be received. "I did not achieve great intimacy with the great polygamist of the Salt Lake City," Trollope confesses.

> He received me in his doorway, not asking me to enter, and inquired whether I were not a miner. When I told him that I was not a miner, he asked me whether I earned my bread. I told him I did. "I guess you're a miner," said he. I again assured him that I was not. "Then how do you earn your bread?" I told him that I did so by writing books. "I'm sure you're a miner," said he. Then he turned upon his heel, went back into the house, and closed the door.

Throughout his long book, Professor Hall is utterly responsible, competent, and not infrequently a bit dull. His basic procedure, once Trollope has gotten around to publishing books, is to insert a potted summary of the latest volume every dozen pages or so. This is a perfectly normal operation, of course, but *en masse* and without much effort to "place" Trollope in a larger literary context, it soon becomes tedious. If one has read the book, the summary is superfluous; if one hasn't, it is opaque. Then, too, Professor Hall has allowed himself a great deal of repetition: readers encounter the same points, even some favorite quotations, again and again. Perhaps he would have done well to trim his manuscript by eighty or one hundred pages.

Professor Hall remarks in his introduction that he has not attempted to write a "'thesis' biography." That is certainly all to the good. But those familiar with the lineaments of Trollope's life are nonetheless likely to find Professor Hall's book most engaging when he steps back from his chronicle and offers an opinion. He is particularly good on the nature of Trollope's religious belief. It has often been remarked that Trollope's clergymen are longer on amenity than theology. Even the dreamy Mr. Harding, for all his charm, doesn't get beyond asking himself what "can a man's religion be worth, if it does not support him against the natural melancholy of declining years?" In fact, Trollope specialized in what Henry James called "the full-fed worldly churchman," men like Archdeacon Grantly: canny, political, vigilant. "Unlike Homer," Trollope writes, Dr. Grantly "never nods." But this is not to say that Trollope regarded religion as a species of applied hypocrisy. As Professor Hall notes,

> Trollope, like so many Victorians, wanted to believe, but belief itself was so much a mystery to him that . . . he hardly knew, precisely, what he believed. That segment of the Church of England informally denominated 'broad' suited Trollope nicely; he could pretty much dismiss the Old Testament, admire the moral teachings of Christ, and keep up an ill-defined belief in a supreme being and a vague hope of some kind of immortality.

Many modern commentators, reading themselves back into Trollope, have depicted him as a kind of closet atheist. But as Professor Hall's comments imply, this is to misunderstand the complexity of Trollope's situation and the religious milieu of his time. Whatever religious doubts Trollope entertained, they did not capsize his spiritual equanimity. And why should they have? We may be reasonably certain he would have regarded the deliberate *cultivation* of doubt —something we take more or less for granted—as a culpable self-indulgence. In this respect, his spiritual outlook, if we can call it that, differs markedly from ours. It may indeed be one of the chief glories of such serious-minded Victorians that they were able to sustain doubt without jettisoning their faith. Where the modern, secular world begins by assuming doubt, the Victorians had the luxury of beginning from the assumption of faith. Certainly, there were

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plenty of Victorians assailed by radical doubt; but this was regarded—as much by themselves as by those around them—more as a catastrophe than a liberation. If that dampened their appetite for irony and sometimes rendered their earnestness naïve, well, there are virtues beyond irony and faults beyond naïveté.

Among the virtues that Trollope practiced in his novels was unstinting honesty to the fundamentals of human experience. As he stressed repeatedly, in the *Autobiography* and elsewhere, it was a matter of "deep conscience" with him how he portrayed his characters. To be sure, "the writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing." But, for Trollope, the novelist must not sacrifice truth for effect. In this respect, the novelist's task resembles the poet's: both work toward "the same end": "By either, false sentiments may be fostered; false notions of humanity may be engendered; false honour, false love, false worship may be created; by either, vice instead of virtue may be taught." One way that Trollope sought to avoid "false sentiments" was by reminding his readers that the tale they were reading was just that, a tale. For example, in *Barchester Towers*, when Eleanor Bold is pursued by a clutch of undesirable suitors, Trollope lets us know early on that Eleanor will choose wisely in the end. "But let the gentle-hearted reader be under no apprehension whatsoever. It is not destined that Eleanor should marry Mr. Slope or Bertie Stanhope." James recoiled from such passages, describing them as "suicidal." But in the context of Trollope's moral purpose, they may be seen as salutary disenchantments.

And what, finally, was Trollope's "moral purpose"? It is of course hard to say. Trollope is not a writer from whom one can easily extract formulas. But in her unjustly neglected essay "Trollope For Grown-Ups" (1962), the critic Clara Claiborne Park comes close to the heart of the matter when she describes the novelist as "the laureate of compromise." Trollope is almost alone, she notes, in telling us "what we need to hear: be reasonable, be moderate, in action, in desire, in expectation, and you will be fairly happy." This may seem like small beer. But it can be powerful compensation for what Professor Park calls "the desolation caused by naked principle among people." If Trollope lacked a doctrine to impose as virtue, he came armed with an abundance of experience and psychological insight. As his narrator puts it in *Barchester Towers*, "Till we can become divine we must be content to be human, lest in our hurry for a change we sink to something lower."

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Near Wesley Lake

by Jeffrey Hart

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full . . .
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar . . .
—Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach" (1867)

A living wave from the world's great sea,
From its ceaseless, sad, commotion,
Breaks with a song of praise and prayer
On the sands of the solemn ocean.
—Ethel Lynn Beers, "At Ocean Grove" (1870?)

It is poignant to bring together these two passages of verse. Matthew Arnold's famous "Dover Beach" is an anthology piece, perhaps even a great poem. The poet stands on the Dover shore as the tide goes out, and sees it as a simile for the nineteenth-century loss of Christian faith, a loss the product of skepticism, secularism, and the biblical scholarship of the Germans—"all the science of Tübingen," as he puts it in his famous preface.

At about the same time, Ethel Lynn Beers, a New York writer of poetry and fiction, was interpreting the movement of the sea in a very different way. Now an author perhaps deservedly forgotten, Beers was best known during her lifetime for the Civil War poem "All Quiet Along the Potomac." Her lines about the Atlantic, inspired by the New Jersey seaside town of Ocean Grove, could conceivably have been composed as a response to Arnold's poem. A literary woman such as she might well have known of "Dover Beach," but probably the poems are only spiritually connected. The tide is going out, at Dover, for Matthew Arnold. At Ocean Grove, a "living wave" breaks "with a song of praise and prayer/ On the sands of the solemn ocean." A poignant cultural contrast. I hazard the judgment that Beers's forgotten verse is better-written than Arnold's. His "But now I only hear . . ." is surely a solecism, and should have been "hear only."

However that may be, the town of Ocean Grove on the New Jersey shore represents a beleaguered but surviving artifact of nineteenth-century idealism. One thinks by comparison of Brook Farm, the Platonic community of "Fruitlands" set up by Bronson Alcott in Massachusetts, the phalansteries of Charles Fourier, Thoreau's cabin at Walden, the Shaker and Quaker colonies, and many others. The difference is that today Ocean Grove remains alive and the others are gone forever.

Cultural historians adduce various motives for such utopianisms: a widespread desire to purify the nation after the egregious slaughter of the Civil War, a rejection of the supposed materialism of the Gilded Age, a rejection of skepticism or cynicism, a resurgence of the religious faith that had been present from the religious founding of the Colonies, an experimental perfectionism. There is something plausibile about all such speculation. But Ocean Grove is alive today because its utopianism was grounded

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in firm principle and human plausibility, and because it reflected the severe Methodist Christian teaching of a remarkable man, John Wesley (1703-1791).

Today Ocean Grove is visually startling. Its homes and hotels are wooden Victorian gingerbread. On its broad verandas people sit in the shade on rocking chairs. American flags are prominent. Along the boardwalk couples stroll and regard the glinting sunlight on the sea. Every inch of property in the town is owned by the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, which issues hundred-year leases, revocable for bad behavior. There is no swimming on Sunday morning, when one should be in church. The shadow of a man is history, thought Emerson; and John Wesley casts a long shadow at Ocean Grove.

On the northern border of the town is Wesley Lake, a long and narrow body of water. Just north of the lake lies the devastated town of Asbury Park, once a famous seaside resort. The town was named for the great Methodist preacher Francis Asbury, who is said to have preached a thousand sermons a year, both in the states of the Union and in the wilder western territories. A furious emotional force drove him, a force emanating from John Wesley.

Late-nineteenth-century drawings and photographs of Asbury Park show Victorian seaside hotels, ladies in long dresses, carriages, crowds along the boardwalk. "Gentleman Jim" Corbett trained here for his fight with John L. Sullivan. The young reporter Stephen Crane covered the social seasons here for *The New-York Tribune*. President Grant had a summer house nearby. President Garfield, shot by a crank in Union Station, came here to recover, unsuccessfully, in the ocean air.

Today Asbury Park is a wasteland, a once-beautiful place murdered by the black riots of 1968. It is making fitful efforts to revive itself, testing the proposition that there is life after death. It doesn't look likely in Asbury Park. The streets are dangerous after dark. The hotels, bathhouses, and Ferris wheel are gone. The beautiful antique carousel animals have been sold and the amusement park closed down. Even the famous Swan Boats of my own childhood are gone. The town is haunted by menacing teenage toughs, crack, prostitutes, and, worse, the stink of terminal social decay.

But south of Wesley Lake, across from this devastation, you are still to a degree in John Wesley country. History always bears the imprint of an inspired person, the founder of a town, a college, a country, a religion. Whether the founding takes hold and survives depends on the strength and validity of the inspiration. Even setting aside the question of the existence of God, Wesley's belief produced those "clear effects" that William James considered the "pragmatic test" of genuine religious experience. John Wesley lives, if only as a wraith, south of Wesley Lake.

In Ocean Grove we have a comprehensive quietness. Madonna has no influence here. As the giant organ in the Methodist Auditorium, now a national landmark, peals "Rock of Ages," I stroll by Wesley Lake and try to think of that eighteenth-century man.

I know that scholars debate the point, but it seems to me virtually certain that John Wesley's famous "Aldersgate experience" really was decisive for his emotional life and international power. The scholars say that before May 24, 1738, his life was turning increasingly toward God. Yes, but on that day he had an experience that perhaps crystallized what had gone before, and is central to his voluminous *Journal*.

An Oxford graduate and Fellow of Christ Church College, an ordained minister in the Church of England, Wesley happened—that word is no doubt inadequate—to attend a meeting of dissenting Protestants in Nettleton Court, just off Aldersgate Street in London. There he heard a man reading from a translation of Martin Luther's preface to Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans, surely one of the most extraordinary works in our culture. After this reading, Wesley rose to testify to what he felt was a moment of "conversion." He felt his heart "strangely

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warmed," and believed that his sins, *his sins*, were forgiven.

Of course before the Aldersgate experience Wesley had been a devout Christian, but he clearly thought that this experience was special. Perhaps he was moved by it from conviction to passion. It certainly reinforced his view that faith is an inward thing. Of course in a general way this was nothing new. As over against the Roman Catholic Church, which preached faith-plus-works, the Protestant movement from the start had put an aggressive stress upon inward "faith." It is only a superficial paradox that tumultuous "works" flowed from John Wesley's personal experience of "faith." Wesley had one of the most powerful and determined minds and compelling personalities in eighteenth-century England. "I hate to meet John Wesley," said Samuel Johnson. "The dog enchants you with his conversation, and then breaks away to go and visit some old woman."

In his maturity, Wesley was deeply learned in Christian theology—"the religion of the heart," he called it, "the religion which Kempis, Pascal, Fénelon enjoyed"—and used his knowledge with ease. It is notable here that the great Methodist, so-called, refers in friendly fashion to three great Catholics. John Wesley's *Letter to a Roman Catholic* was published in 1968, with surrounding editorial material, including a preface by none other than Augustin Cardinal Bea, president of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity. John Wesley's *Letter* leaps from the page with literary power. No one can read it and doubt that Wesley himself believed that he spoke with the authority of the prophets. As a young man and the son of a poor Church of England parson who spent his reflective life writing a commentary on the Book of Job—Wesley edited it and prepared it for the press after his father's death—he had been introduced to the writings of Thomas à Kempis, author of *The Imitation of Christ*, by Sally Kirkham, the beautiful daughter of another parson. He was almost certainly in love with her. The members of the Wesley-Kirkham circle wrote to and addressed one another with names out of Renaissance pastoral poetry. Sally Kirkham was "Varanese." Thus Wesley writes, "First saw Varanese. May it not be in vain." In this circle of young friends in the neighborhood of Oxford, in the Cotswolds, the Granville sisters were "Aspasia" and "Selima." John Wesley himself was "Cyrus." His younger brother Charles, later also a great Methodist preacher, was "Araspes."

John Wesley at this point in his life was in no position to marry Varanese, and she wedded a local schoolmaster. However, she wrote to Wesley soon after her marriage that "I would certainly call you if my husband should resent our freedom, which I am satisfied he never will . . ." Varanese's sister Damaris told Wesley that the schoolmaster certainly *was* jealous of him. Their "freedom" together apparently consisted of long serious talks during which they held hands. Years afterward, Wesley's sister Emily wrote to him that if he had not lost Sally Kirkham "you would not have been so spiritualized, but something of this lower world would have had its part, wise as you are."

Perhaps so. But I beg to dissent. I think that though Wesley was strongly attracted to women and they to him, he deeply felt that such human love was a distraction from the goal of the human spirit, union with God. In his mind, I hazard the guess, he put sexual matters aside; and yet it was a struggle.

In June 1720, John Wesley went up to Oxford's Christ Church College, one of its most beautiful establishments, and turned the university inside out. He was a fine and serious scholar, well deserving his election as a Fellow of Christ Church. But his vigorous young mind was focused upon eternity, and he found the traditional religious practices of the Church of England lax to the point of paganism. A century later, another Oxford man, John Henry Newman, drew much the same conclusion. The powerful personality of John Wesley constituted a sort of religious magnetic field at Oxford, drawing to him a circle, always enlarging, of ardent young men—often to the acute distress of their parents.

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Wesley laid down "rules" for their religious life, and earned the derisive Oxford name "Methodist." Wesley's rules were as inflexible as those of any Trappist monastery: how many times a day to pray, how many times to meditate, how many times to study scripture, rules on chapel attendance and on the total abstinence from tobacco and alcohol, rules on the nobility of fasting. Wesley's circle was institutionalized at Oxford as the Holy Club. It produced tragedies, some of them spectacular. One William Morgan, a young aristocrat who kept greyhounds in his rooms, fell under Wesley's influence and was almost disinherited by his father. Extensive fasting ruined Morgan's health, and he wasted away with tuberculosis and died insane. When Morgan was dying, Wesley wrote of him with a chilliness that one sometimes encounters in saints, and which we might well call the chill of eternity. Wesley wrote: "Surely now he is a burthen to himself and almost useless to the world." The rigor Wesley demonstrates here appears almost un-Christian.

After Oxford, John Wesley undertook a disastrous mission to the British colony of Georgia, a beleaguered and contentious settlement presided over by Governor James Oglethorpe. In 1735, the year Wesley arrived there, the colony was riven by religious, political, and familial factions. Wesley hoped to make "methodical" Christians of them, and failed. As Oglethorpe's secretary for Indian affairs, he hoped to convert the savages, but failed there as well. He caused constant trouble, as when he had a local frontiersman thrown in the lockup for hunting during divine services. And, as usual, he became ambiguously involved with several women. One Sophia Hopkey, thinking that Wesley was courting her, broke off her engagement with another man. Wesley considered that he was only trying to deepen her soul. Annoyed by her complaints, Wesley denied her Holy Communion. Consternation broke out in the colony, there were law suits and threats, and Governor Oglethorpe, a worldly man and not especially devout, decided that he had had enough of John Wesley. In December 1737, Wesley wrote to his brother: "The hour has come for me to fly for my life, leaving this place; and soon as evening prayers were over, about eight o'clock, I shook the dust off my feet and left Georgia, after having preached the Gospel there . . ." He was soon back in London. Before long, many men in the hierarchy of the Church of England undoubtedly wished the young minister had stayed in America or had even been done in by the Indians.

From the official point of view it was bad enough that Wesley began open-air preaching. He was drawing throngs in open fields and was independent of any established parish church. Worse was to follow. His *ad hoc* preaching seems to have begun mere months after Aldersgate, on November 8, 1738, at a hanging. He and his brother Charles were at Newgate prison "to do the last good office to the condemned malefactors," and Wesley found his effect to be "the most glorious instance of faith triumphing over sin and death." His *Journal* records the day's agenda.

> 7 A.M. communion, prayers, preached; 9 in the coach meditated; 10 at St. Giles' in the fields, where the procession of the condemned usually halted for the prisoners to have a bowl of ale; 10:30 Tyburn . . . 11 in the cart, prayer, singing, prayer, all cheerful; 12 . . . prayer preached to the mob.

All that John Wesley cares about here or anywhere else is *bringing souls to God*. There exists virtually no human dimension; on the way to the gibbet: "All cheerful." He preached again that day, had dinner with friends, meditated and prayed, and went to bed. As one of his recent biographers, Stanley Ayling, perceptively remarks, a key phrase in this *Journal* entry is "preached to the mob." Wesley's momentous and historic career, I judge, was launched that day after the hanging on Tyburn Hill. To his dying day, Wesley regarded himself as a loyal clergyman in the Church of England, but his religious practice was unusual.

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On the last day of 1738, he and some sixty others, including his brother Charles and the great evangelist George Whitefield, attended an all-night religious "love feast" at Fetter Lane. Wesley recorded, "with awe and amazement," the power of the coming of God at 3 A.M., "insomuch as many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground." His *Journal* and his letters over the following months and years record numerous examples of this convulsive phenomenon, men and women "falling into extreme agony both of body and soul . . . even in the street," calling upon God "as out of the belly of Hell," dropping to the ground "as if thunderstruck," "straining as if to vomit." Such intensities unhinged the none too strong mind of Christopher Smart, a gifted poet, frequenter of the Wesley-Kirkham circle, and friend of Dr. Johnson. Smart took to sudden fits of prayer in the streets, fell apart, and had to be hospitalized in Bedlam. However, while there, he composed a remarkable poem—if it can be called a poem—the *Jubilate Agno*. It is a strange and powerful literary object, full of a not-quite demented praise of God, as in the following lines on his "Cat Jeoffry":

> For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
> For he is the servant of the Living God duly
> and daily serving him.
> For at the first glance of the glory of God
> in the East he worships in his way.
> For this is done by wreathing his body seven
> times round with elegant quickness. . . .
> For having done duty and received blessing
> he begins to consider himself.
> For this he performs in ten degrees.
> For first he looks upon his fore-paws
> to see if they are clean.
> For secondly he kicks up behind
> to clear away there.
> For thirdly he works it upon stretch
> with the fore-paws extended.
> For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood . . .

Smart's "Cat Jeoffry" is clearly a methodist; he worships God, in Smart's eyes at least, according to a methodical sequence and experiences the glory of God. (The contemporary American poet Allen Ginsberg tells me that his own "long line" derives not from Whitman, as is usually thought, but from Smart. Ginsberg, too, was at one point confined for emotional disturbance.)

Tirelessly journeying around England on horseback, Wesley hit town and city like a whirlwind. His sermons, strange to say, were almost academic in character, tightly structured and argued, devout and learned; but then the words we read upon the printed page cannot go far toward representing his force of character as he preached. He aroused in every soul before him a consciousness of sin and, counter to the doctrine of Predestination, the certainty of salvation if the will turned toward God. Eternal punishment, he avowed, was the penalty for rejecting the offer of salvation through faith. Everywhere he went, his impact upon listeners was enormous, producing frequent effects of crowd hysteria. The devout young scholar of Christ Church, Oxford, had become an uncontrollable force in the English-speaking world.

John Wesley was not impressive physically. He was short even by eighteenth-century standards, probably about five-foot-five, and compact of build. His features were sharp, and in portraits from his middle life we see brown hair cut in a page-boy fashion to a length a couple of inches below his ears. His personal power came from his seriousness, cogency, and relentless intensity. His attractiveness to women seems to have come entirely from his power as a preacher and serious Christian witness. The Protestant preacher possesses a special erotic occupational hazard because his message depends to so large a degree upon his personal authority, which means that he must captivate his congregation through the force of his own personality. His sermon is much more central to the occasion than a sermon is to the Catholic Mass, where the sacraments have a different kind of authority. For the Protestant minister, the occupational hazard is that *eros* and *agape* will become

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confused. Thus John Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel* satirized a well-known preacher as "well hung Balaam," a term that could apply either to his eloquent tongue or to another organ. But Wesley himself was not touched by scandal.

Today, as the twentieth century nears its end, the question of Predestination does not figure much in Protestant sermons—even less, perhaps, than do the other conundrums to which Wesley devoted his life: eternity, sin, and salvation. During Wesley's lifetime, however, Predestination was a passionate issue. To reread John Calvin's great *Institutes* is to grasp its power and understand Wesley. Calvin reasons as rigorously as Spinoza, and his premise is the total power and omniscience of God. The doctrine of Predestination held that some souls are elected to salvation from all eternity, while others are not. The doctrine certainly goes against the common-sense experience of moral choice, or free will. Is a murderer among the elect no matter what he has done? Is the virtuous man damned, no matter what he has done? But Calvin dared to write as if he understood the mind of God (surely an ironic relationship to Omniscience), and his devotion was driven by a fierce and lucid logic. Is God omniscient? If you denied it, you diminished the idea of God and thus blasphemed. If you said yes, He is, as Scripture seems to enjoin, then you had to admit that He knew who would be saved and who would not. But Calvin's doctrine had a political side as well. The doctrine of Predestination amounted to a de-legitimization of the Roman Catholic Church. It meant that no good works, no confession and no absolution, no priest and no sacraments unlocked the gates of Heaven. Calvinism thus buttressed an anti-Catholic nationalism in Protestant Europe. The doctrine of Predestination tended to undercut the hierarchical social order of pre-Reformation Europe. The prince and the king in their splendor might *not* be among the elect. The holy hierarchy of Heaven is different from the social hierarchy.

The compromise Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England genially split the difference, affirming both Free Will and Predestination. John Wesley would have none of this sort of thing. He was a thundering Free Will man.

From the standpoint of the Church of England, the open-air preaching of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield was deplorable, though the institutional church could not accommodate the enormous demand for the Wesleys' sermons, or, in their wake, anyone's sermons. There were not enough ordained ministers, not enough buildings. To produce more preachers, Wesley began to approve of "gifted" lay preachers, and set up his own network of them outside the control of the bishops of his Church. Of course he based this practice upon Scripture, in defiance of the English hierarchy:

> Upon reflection, I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity . . . The first preachers met these *catechumens*, as they were called, apart from the congregation, that they might instruct, exhort, and pray with them, according to their several necessities.

In this dispute, Wesley was alert enough to point out that, outside the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, lay preaching was not new. Were the original disciples ordained ministers? Was Jesus a priest?

We read of the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield (who split with John Wesley on Predestination) preaching to congregations, audiences, to twenty thousand people in the fields outside London, outside Bristol, preaching in the scabrous English prisons—and falling under the condemnation of Bishop Gibson of London.

We should not judge Bishop Gibson harshly. It had, after all, been recent English experience that religious emotions could get out of control, as they had in the seventeenth-century Civil War, not to mention the background against which that late Reformation explosion took place, the cen-

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tury of bloody religious conflict that had ended with the Peace of Westphalia, a peace of exhaustion. Wesley's turbulent spirit might be stirring up such emotions in a dangerous way. From the Protestant point of view, the Catholic Church had turned Jesus Christ into a bureaucratic accounting game: "good works" meant financing a cathedral, telling your beads, buying indulgences, worshiping a relic, getting time off in Purgatory with cash, and unswerving loyalty to the Pope. From a Protestant point of view, the Catholic Church, with great impiety, was claiming to merchandise the mind of God. Of course John Calvin had claimed to understand the mind of God from a different direction: affirming Predestination at the same time as he proclaimed God's utter transcendence and foreignness to the human mind.

Fishing in these perilous religious waters, Wesley meanwhile engaged in learned religious polemics of great length. He conducted, for example, a lengthy exchange with Conyers Middleton over such questions as whether miracles occurred in history after the accounts in the Gospels. Seeing himself as a defender of the Church of England, Middleton charged in pamphlet after pamphlet that Wesley's Methodists, like "the primitive Christians," credulously said yes, miracles had gone on after the Gospel narratives. Wesley thundered no, Mr. Middleton, the charge had been made "by Jews and heathens," and in his support he brought his learned Oxford artillery to bear, citing Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian. One could not doubt the explicit evidence of the Church Fathers. To do so would cast doubt upon the entire Christian enterprise. If one doubted the Fathers, "Then it is plain all the history of the Bible is utterly precarious and uncertain; then I indeed may presume, but certainly cannot know, that Jesus of Nazareth was ever born, much less that he healed the sick and raised Lazarus or himself from the dead." And yet, for all Wesley's learning and superior capacities, there exists a vulnerability. It is as if he saw the possibility of nineteenth-century doubt: "Then it is plain that all the history of the Bible is precarious and uncertain . . ."

Paul Johnson, in his *History of Christianity*, says that John Wesley's religion "was almost totally devoid of intellectual content . . . wholly ethical and emotional." On the evidence, this statement is difficult to credit. John Wesley was highly intellectual, perhaps even intellectual to a fault; his sermons indoors or out, insofar as we have them, are not harangues but are loaded with argument and learned references. It is very likely that Wesley himself was unprepared for the volcanic emotional effect he created. If Paul Johnson, however, had addressed that assessment to the Methodism of today —or, for that matter, to virtually any branch of Christianity, including the Catholic—he would have been correct. Mind and argument have gone out of the work of even the most eminent and admired preachers, yes, even in Ocean Grove, leaving only emotion and "ethics."

Wesley's movement grew, and before long washed up powerfully on the shores of the American colonies. It took glad root here and, after the War of Independence, with no Church of England to oppose it, it began to flourish. By the late 1800s several Methodist communities had been founded, among them Ocean Grove.

In 1869, Wesley Lake was called Long Pond. A scrubby underbrush of pines and grass covered the sand-dunes, and there were thickets of blueberries and beach plums. It was in that year that a Methodist minister from Philadelphia, the Reverend William Osborn, in the company of the Reverend George Neal of nearby Long Branch, New Jersey, first visited the lake. They came in search of a spot for a "camp-meeting," a religious retreat for the devout, of which the first in America seems to have been held on the banks of the Red River in Kentucky in 1799. Osborn thought the site ideal for such a purpose; he knelt and prayed, then he bought eleven shorefront acres for fifty dollars.

The prime mover of Ocean Grove, how-

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ever, turned out to be the Reverend Elwood Stokes, who was born a Quaker in New Jersey in 1815 and converted to Methodism in 1834. Like Wesley, he kept a journal, and practiced "methodical" prayer, fasting, and meditation, and kept a strict watch on his thoughts, words, and deeds. He labored as an itinerant minister in the Wesleyan pattern, and then served several New Jersey parishes. After the Civil War, in 1867, Stokes was appointed Presiding Elder of the shore district, and decided to devote himself full-time to Ocean Grove. First, his congregation consisted of a tented camp-meeting, but the environment was so attractive that year-round residents rapidly accumulated. Today, there are still several rows of tents, modern and serviceable, nestled beside the large wooden auditorium, the successor of earlier structures. The tents still accommodate the summer camp-meeting, but year-round residents needed sturdier buildings against the Atlantic winter winds. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the oldest wooden buildings resemble wooden tents. The Reverend Stokes presided over the construction of a water system, the laying of a wooden sidewalk, and a multitude of essential financial and administrative matters. By the time of his death in 1882, the future development of the colony was clearly adumbrated, and it is fitting that a large brass statue of the Reverend Stokes stands, or rather sits in a large brass chair, gazing down a broad mall called Ocean Pathway at the Atlantic Ocean.

The houses and hotels constructed in the 1880s and 1890s go far beyond tents and rude wooden buildings and represent a Victorian explosion of gingerbread, verandas, and cupolas; the style is unmistakable. The town is still Methodist in the main, still setting its Puritan Methodist face against the fleshpots to the north and south. Ocean Grove was and is resolutely middle-class and proud of being so. It is Methodist, still Victorian, and it is easy to imagine the long-ago families coming to these hotels, with the mothers in long white dresses and fathers in straw boaters.

The great Protestant preachers of the late twentieth century still come in the summer to the vast Auditorium, which has the biggest pipe organ in the United States, and one of the best choirs. The Auditorium preacher from across the country who appears before that packed house wants to hit a religious home-run; and if he has a sense of history, he knows how many others have stood where he does now, including Ulysses S. Grant, on his last public appearance, William McKinley, and William Howard Taft. Today's preachers really try to belt out the inspiration.

I'm not sure that John Wesley would be pleased. In fact, I think he would frown deeply on the lack of serious intellectual and scriptural content in these Auditorium sermons, which surely represent a cross-section of the mind of today's Protestant church. John Wesley knew not only his Thomas à Kempis, Pascal, and Fénelon but also his Augustine, Tertullian, and Saint Jerome; he also knew his later theological masters, such as Richard Hooker and William Law. There is no evidence that the preachers who now visit Ocean Grove know anything of the kind, let alone the arguments that seek to validate claims of God's existence or the resurrection of Christ. The preaching is of an emotional sort, without much mind behind it, and the theological underpinnings are all but absent. The noun "Jesus" in these preachers' mouths does not seem to refer to a historical individual who lived and died two thousand years ago.

Most of the serious questions that burned within John Wesley, and the rigor, possibly pathological, of his Methodist mind, are no longer present in Ocean Grove. Yet, as I have said, some of that spirit can be felt in the town itself, its architecture and its manners. While it is true that you can now drive your car here on Sunday (you could not do so in the 1930s) and that you can now wear a swimsuit in a public place (in the 1930s you would have been arrested), children must be off the streets by 10 P.M., there are no bars or discos, and no liquor, at least in public. It is pleasant to sit in the dark on one's private

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balcony, drink what appears to be orange juice, and watch the same great sea that Ethel Beers once wrote about, and the lights of boats running far out.

Perhaps Wesley would have liked it after all. Wesley Lake is gradually being cleaned up after the pollution of thirty years, the ducks are returning to it, and maybe there again will be Swan Boats holding six or eight children. The renovations in Ocean Grove are rigorously required by the Town Committee to conform to the Victorian style of the place. The yuppies are coming, but the whole idea of yuppies seems increasingly insubstantial. If John Wesley were here he might well remark the striking resemblance between those girls on the boardwalk and the Granville sisters, "Selima" and "Aspasia."

On February 22, 1791, John Wesley, weak and feverish, was driven in a coach to a private home in the town of Leatherhead to preach what turned out to be his last sermon. He thought that the family there had "begun to receive the truth." Later that day, back home on London's City Road, he realized that he was clearly dying and spoke of it freely. On the first of March he said to a Miss Ritchie that he desired to write. She records that:

> I brought him a pen and ink, and putting the pen into his Hand, and holding the paper before him, he said, "I cannot." I replied, "Let me write for you, sir; tell me what you would say." "Nothing," returned he, "but that God is with us."

Then, astonishingly, he broke into song, singing Isaac Watts's hymn "I'll Praise My Maker while I Have Breath." He lived into the next day, intermittently conscious. He is reported to have said, "The best of all is, God is with us." According to those who witnessed his death, he said a score of times, "I'll praise . . . I'll praise . . ." On the second day of March he died quietly at home. The chapels rapidly filled.

It is quite possible that the Bishops of the Church of England were theologically correct in viewing Wesley's "by faith alone" as a dangerous error. Original thinkers and original theologians often enough exaggerate their own insights at the expense of balance or "catholicity." Although Wesley was profoundly intelligent and steeped in the Christian tradition, his teaching was also informed by a direct intimation of his own relation to God and his own salvation. The danger here is sentimentality, not in Wesley to be sure but in an increasing number of his followers. Not in the Reverend Osborn or the Reverend Stokes, the founding Elders of Ocean Grove. For them faith indeed came first, but it meant works—and that was what it meant in the eighteenth century when Wesley, full of zeal and astonishingly learned, created a new state of mind in England, in America, and in the beautiful Methodist town on the New Jersey shore.

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Old Mozart & the new past

by Samuel Lipman

At the end of January, I attended a "Mozart on Period Instruments" concert at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. It set me to thinking about the new audience that in recent years has been created for old Mozart and the new sense of the musical past—and perhaps of the past itself—that this new and younger audience seems to be seeking. The program, part of the Lincoln Center commitment to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of Mozart's death by playing every note he wrote, did not contain any of Mozart's famous works. There were two sets of piano variations, K.179 and K.265, the latter using as the theme a tune we know as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"; the Fantasy for Piano, K.396; the Sonata for Violin and Piano, K.305; two solo piano concertos, K.37 and K.40; and the Concerto for Three Pianos, subtitled "Lodron," K.242.

The main performers were the three renowned fortepianists Melvyn Tan, Steven Lubin, and Malcolm Bilson. All three have made many well-received fortepiano recordings, both as soloists and with small and larger ensembles. The Singapore-born Tan and the American Lubin have each recorded all the Beethoven piano—or should it be fortepiano?—concertos, Tan with Roger Norrington and the London Classical Players for EMI, and Lubin with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music for L'Oiseau Lyre. The American Bilson has recorded all the Mozart piano concertos with John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists for Deutsche Grammophon. Each of the three has made many other recordings as well, and their appearance on one program provided an opportunity to sample the fortepiano phenomenon at what one must assume is its best. The keyboard players were assisted in the concerted works by the American violinist Daniel Stepner, who served as the concertmaster of the tiny accompanying orchestra, which was made up of six violins, two violas, two cellos, one bass, two oboes, two horns, and two trumpets. Three different fortepianos were used. Each was a recent copy of an instrument of Mozart's time. Each fortepianist had his favorite instrument, which he used when the work being played called, as did all but one on the program, for a single keyboard; in the three-keyboard concerto, the fortepianists changed places and pianos with each other between the work's three movements.

The *mise en scène* for this program was provided by the audience. For this concert, Tully Hall was perhaps three-quarters full, though I was unable to see how many people there were upstairs. The audience seemed quite young, with the average age being perhaps thirty-five, rather than the fifty-plus one sees attending New York's great halls for traditional recital, chamber-music, and orchestral programs. Perhaps I was in a sentimental mood, but it seemed to me that I saw a remarkable number of couples obviously in love with each other.

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Then, too, the audience seemed plainly dressed, as compared with a normal concert audience, and in general seemed quiet, thoughtful, and almost shy. With their humble mien, the "Mozart on Period Instruments" audience seemed to provide a stark contrast to the self-assured and perhaps even arrogant bearing of the concert public that I, at least, have known all my life. The audience response to the performers was warm, both in welcoming their coming on the stage and in approving their playing at the conclusion of each piece; the conversation between pieces and during the intermission seemed subdued and, when I overheard discussions of the music, highly respectful.

I am afraid that I don't have anything very enthusiastic to say about the performances. I have always thought the sound of the fortepiano to resemble nothing so much as that of an old upright piano, better maintained and certainly in better tune than most uprights ever are, but sounding like an upright nonetheless. The fortepiano, as a transitional instrument between the plucked harpsichord and the hammer-struck modern piano, has, in slow passages, a plonking, short-lived timbre; in fast passages the instrument tends to sound like a whole beehive suddenly excited. As on the harpsichord, pitch definition is poor; when many notes are played together or in rapid sequence, the exact pitch-quality of each note remains in doubt even to a listener who knows the piece being played or is following the performance with the music. Furthermore, because the fortepiano has a wooden, rather than a metal, frame on which its strings are stretched, the carrying power of the instrument is small. This diminished carrying power, when allied to the fortepiano's short tone, guarantees that even excitingly played performances will remain prevailingly small-scale.

Thus every element of the evening—the program, the audience, and the performances—was modest in scale. Of course, there were differences between the fortepianists and between the fortepianos. Melvyn Tan seemed to have the most flair in his playing, Steven Lubin seemed to have the fleetest fingers, and Malcolm Bilson seemed to be, in contrast to his two colleagues, a rather messy executant. None of the fortepianists—Tan in the Twelve Variations on a Minuet by J. C. Fischer, K.179, and in the Concerto in D major, K.40; Lubin in the Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, maman," K.265, and the Concerto in F major, K.37; Bilson in the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major, K.305, and the Fantasy in C minor, K.396; and all of them together in the Triple Concerto in F major, K. 242—seemed able to communicate very much drama or excitement in his playing; like the music itself, the playing seemed to burn at a fairly tepid temperature.

But it must be said that each musician's playing was not without individuality or a frequently interesting turn of phrase. But for my taste, what stifled the merits that these players undoubtedly possess was the basically unacceptable generic sound of the fortepiano. I liked best the sound of Lubin's instrument, a copy of an original Anton Walter fortepiano (or so I gathered from Bilson's not terribly well-projected stage announcement); unfortunately, what Lubin's instrument gained in a rather more pleasing and longer-toned treble it lost in even further reduced definition in the bass. Sadly, whichever fortepiano was being used, the instrument simply failed to provide—at least in a modern and reasonably large concert hall—a vivid and pleasurable listening experience.

The orchestral playing was up to the usual low level of so-called authentic performances. Daniel Stepner, the concertmaster of the orchestra and the violinist in the sonata, managed to produce a tight, almost vibratoless sound, and was frequently drowned out (in the sonata) by the hardly massive sound of Bilson's fortepiano. The string playing in the orchestra was suffused overall by a certain wheezing quality, and the wind and brass playing ranged from acceptable to shaky. Rapid passages were frequently not together, and the general effect, aside from a

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virtuous air of authenticity—all the orchestral players, save the cellists, stood—was one of under-rehearsal.

For most of my life I have been a pianist, and after the concert I gave a good deal of thought to the reasons for the evolution of the modern piano. The piano that we know now, of which the Steinway is certainly the finest example, reached its present form sometime toward the end of the nineteenth century. It had been developed throughout the century to become an ever louder, ever more brilliant instrument. Those responsible for the inventions that made this development possible were responding to the demands of the extraordinary music written for keyboard performance from the time of Beethoven on. The piano, like the pianist, was asked to play more and more notes, to create always greater washes of sound—and to keep distinct, when the composer and the performer so wished, each note and each harmony. The piano as it exists today is a remarkable achievement in its beauty and brilliance of tone, in its ability to produce both very loud and very soft sounds and every dynamic level in between. Like the great Italian string instruments of earlier centuries, the modern piano seems incapable either of improvement or further development.

Despite the greatness of the modern piano, it has come under extraordinary attack in recent years. First Bach, the foundation of our classical tradition, was removed from the mighty piano's purview, and only the twanging and tinkling harpsichord was judged proper for Bach performance. Then Mozart and Haydn were given over to the fortepiano in the interest of a smaller-scale, more refined conception of the music. And then even Beethoven, who kept demanding more from each new kind of piano that he tried than it could possibly give him, was given over, at first experimentally and now increasingly, to a later version of the fortepiano that one had always thought the composer yearned to see replaced by something more sturdy and powerful.

It was possible to suspect this supercession of the modern piano by its predecessors as long ago as the 1960s. It was then that started the vogue for the Steinway made in Germany over the Steinway made in New York. The German Steinway, with a faster and more responsive action, and hammers made of wool of a different origin from that of its American counterpart, sounded rather old-fashioned: shorter-toned, less powerful and brilliant, more mellow, and altogether more gentle; for the most "musical" European artists, the German Steinway was a more artistic medium, an instrument palpably closer to the nineteenth-century composers who wrote their greatest works for the piano. Indeed, with the wisdom of hindsight, one can see the vogue for the German Steinway as a transitional development—backward—connecting the modern Steinway to the old fortepiano.

What explains this turn of artists, and with them their audience, toward older-sounding instruments, played in older-sounding ways, for the performance of classic music? I think the answer to this complex question must be found in a deep revulsion on the part of contemporary musical audiences for the ambiance of contemporary life. It is widely recognized that taste for a particular kind of music is more than a simply aesthetic decision to prefer one kind of art to another; taste for a particular kind of music is in fact a choice of an entire world, a universe of existence and feeling of which music is both a reflection and an embodiment. To choose avant-garde music is to choose a particular kind of life and what is now so grossly called a life style; to choose an older music is to opt for an older way of life. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the choice of the new music—actually called *Zukunftsmusik* (the music of the future)—was a choice of the future in life as against the present and the past; in our own time, the choice of "Mozart on Period Instruments" is a choice, however unconsciously made and however dimly comprehended, of a former world now perceived to have been more gracious,

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kinder, gentler—in a word, better—than ours. This is not just a rejection of contemporary music, though it certainly is that. Even more, it is a rejection of contemporary life, a rejection that any number of economic, political, and social realities make impossible overtly but that art makes possible covertly.

The past two years have seen a veritable orgy of Mozartomania. In Europe, America, and the Orient, Mozart has become the hottest of all musical commodities. It is tempting to see in this almost absurd concentration on one composer's admittedly great body of work a cynical manipulation of the market by sinister commercial forces ready to make a buck out of anything, even wonderful music. There is a market in music, and there undoubtedly are people making money out of its every twist and turn. But markets are not simply about manipulation; they are also about, and are reflections of, our deepest thoughts and hopes.

And so what seems to me so important about the phenomenon represented by the Mozart concert I attended at Tully Hall was the news the concert conveyed to me about the decision young people—certainly people younger than I—have already made about their preferred direction of life. We must take very seriously the undoubted fact that it is not the old and stodgy among us who have chosen older ways of performing older music. It is the young, and in so doing they are proclaiming, however subtly, that the world in which they now find themselves is profoundly unsatisfactory and unsatisfying.

It is easy to tell the new audience for Mozart that it is impossible to turn back any clock, whether artistic or human. What is very difficult to tell them is that their choice is wrong. In art, as in life, the choice of one's past is the most important statement one can make about the world. What young music lovers have to tell us about the music in itself is not clear, but what they have to say tells us much about themselves, and about our future.

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A still, small voice: the novels of Penelope Fitzgerald

by Bruce Bawer

Among the many symptoms of the American literary scene's current infirmity is that stateside publishers have been slow to take on, and readers on these shores slow to discover, the English novelist of manners Penelope Fitzgerald. Though British critics have justly compared her to such writers as Evelyn Waugh, Kingsley Amis, Barbara Pym, and Anita Brookner—all of whom have long enjoyed sizable readerships here—and though back home she has received one Booker Prize and been nominated for three others, two of her eight novels have yet to appear in U.S. editions and her name is nowhere near as well-known hereabouts as that of Pym or Brookner.[1] Why is this so? The answer is not simply that Fitzgerald, now in her seventy-fifth year, is decidedly English in setting and sensibility (so, after all, are Pym and Brookner); nor is it merely a matter of her novels' temperate tone and modesty of scale. (To read through the reviews of her books is to find, time and again, such words and phrases as "slight," "delicate," "unpretentious," "economy and understatement," "an impression of sharpness and shortness," "in no sense a 'big' book"; more than one critic has compared her novels to watercolors.) Nor is it that, like Pym and Brookner, she is a writer of unsensational stories. For Fitzgerald's novels are not only unsensational: they are elliptical, elusive, episodic, at times exasperating in their deliberate slenderness of plot and lack of resolution; their most essential relationships, pivotal incidents, and intense confrontations tend to happen offstage or to be rendered very concisely.

Instead of action, what Fitzgerald often gives us are apparent digressions, among them conversations in which trivial matters may receive as much attention as important ones—but in which her characters, in one way or another, tellingly reveal themselves. She is less interested in storytelling, per se, than in the qualities that draw people together and the differences that estrange them, in the abiding and numinous mystery that the world is to human beings and that human beings are to one another, and in the disjunction between what they are and what they pretend to be (or imagine or hope themselves to be). She celebrates those who defy mean self-interest in the name of some higher cause—art, truth, love, or even a vague longing for something better—even as she is acutely aware of the hurtful ways that people can treat their nearest and dearest in the name of such causes, and of their often less praiseworthy underlying motives: a fear of losing independence, a need to control, a craving for power. She is fas-

1 Only four of Penelope Fitzgerald's novels are currently in print in America: *Offshore* (141 pages, $7.95), *Innocence* (224 pages, $7.95), and *The Beginning of Spring* (187 pages, $8.95) are in paper from Carroll & Graf; *The Gate of Angels* (167 pages, $19) is newly out in cloth from Nan A. Talese/Doubleday.

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cinated by the dynamic of romantic love and family devotion, but never yields to anything that might be taken as a sentimental impulse; in book after book she reminds us that good and bad can coexist in one heart, and that otherwise unimpressive—and even somewhat ridiculous—people can display remarkable qualities of character. At their best, her *dramatis personae* exhibit those most English of virtues: decency, honesty, quiet fortitude, a sense of duty, an uncomplaining acceptance of one's role and responsibilities in life.

Penelope Fitzgerald's first novel appeared a mere fifteen years ago, when she was nearly sixty. (It was preceded by two biographies, one of Edward Burne-Jones and the other of Fitzgerald's father, an editor of *Punch*, and her uncles, the cryptographer Dillwyn Knox and the priests Wilfred and Ronald Knox; she has since published a third biography, of the English poet Charlotte Mew.) Though now chiefly notable as the fictional debut of a writer whose artistry has since grown in leaps and bounds, *The Golden Child* is a competent whodunit, the sort of mystery that is set mostly in a single institution and whose success depends largely on the author's ability to make that setting interesting. In this case the institution is an unnamed London museum, obviously modeled on the British Museum; and the characters—many of whom might have been plucked out of an Evelyn Waugh novel—are mainly museum officials who, almost to a man, care less about art than about their own careers. During a mega-exhibition of the Golden Treasure of Garamantia, an ancient African civilization, there takes place a series of odd and troubling incidents, chief among them the murder of the distinguished resident archeologist, Sir William Simpkin. Whodunit? Why? The solution turns out to be hidden in a message composed in Garamantian pictographs and carved on a clay tablet in an exhibition display case.

If *The Golden Child* falls short of being a first-rate mystery, it is because Fitzgerald's artistic priorities clash head-on with those of the genre in which she has chosen to work. A murder mystery should be tidy and schematic; the characters may be shot through with ambiguities, and the mystery richly nuanced, but in the end there should be a firm sense of order restored, of pieces falling neatly into place. But to Fitzgerald one of the important points about life is that the pieces never fall neatly into place; she is less interested in devising jigsaw-like plots than in exploring the perplexities of the human condition. To be sure, in an apparent attempt to fit her characters neatly into their assigned roles in the mystery, Fitzgerald tries to reduce most of them to familiar comic-novel types; yet the very resistance to contrivance that makes her later novels feel so credible prevents her, in *The Golden Child*, from tailoring these characters as dexterously as a top-notch mystery writer would to the needs of her plot. Especially unsatisfactory is Waring Smith, the protagonist (and the first of Fitzgerald's many innocents). He is a surprisingly sketchy creation; his motives are never clear, so one has less sympathy for him than one might otherwise—a state of affairs that is hardly unusual in Fitzgerald (who was once told by Ronald Knox that one should write biographies about people one loves and novels about people one dislikes) but is less than desirable in a mystery. What's more, Waring is so terribly passive that it's not even he who solves the case; again, such passivity might work in a literary novel, but not in this genre.

To be sure, Fitzgerald's ironies of circumstance and temperament are far sharper than her plotting. Already in this book she is a forthright critic of manners and morals. The Garamantia exhibition is plainly an allusion to the King Tut extravaganza that helped usher in the age of the museum mega-show; and Fitzgerald captures perfectly the inanity of an era in which armies of people who wouldn't cross the street to look at a Matisse can be persuaded by relentless publicity and media hype to line up in the freezing cold for hours to view a historically inconsequential exhibition of little artistic merit. In good English fashion, moreover,

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she gets in a few digs at Continental art and scholarship. We learn, for example, that Waring and his wife frequently "go out . . . to see films by leading French and Italian directors about the difficulties of making a film." Fitzgerald skewers both the oppressive seriousness of Germans—a Heidelberg Garamantologist's book is entitled *Garamantischengeheimschriftendechiffrierkunst*—and Gallic silliness: a pretentious impromptu oration by Rochegrosse-Bergson, a French scholar, includes a trendy nihilistic flourish to the effect that "[o]ur art—for every man, let us admit it, is an artist—is *to achieve absolutely nothing!*" The audience for this "arrant nonsense" consists of a pair of British journalists, of whom Fitzgerald offers a sardonic description: "exquisites for whom life could hold no further surprises, and removed by their foreign educations from crass British prejudices, [the journalists] sat in their Italian silk shirts and deerskin jackets, waiting, in a kind of energetic idleness. . . . Trained in French lycées, they were unable to resist [Rochegrosse-Bergson's] rounded sentences which now dropped a couple of tones to announce the coming peroration." These few words provide the reader with a veritable beginner's catalogue of qualities (all of them somewhat connected to Continental ways and means) that Fitzgerald holds in disesteem: pretension, foppishness, "energetic idleness," overassurance, a snobbish attitude toward middle-class bigots, a fashionably nihilistic or grotesquely scholarly approach to art. Though *The Golden Child* is far from a masterwork, then (alongside her later novels it looks decidedly primitive), it has wit and personality, and one comes away from it with a clear sense of Fitzgerald's impatience with shabby contemporary values and with the wretched prospects for Western civilization in an age of hype, self-seeking, phoniness, and philistinism, high and low.

The Golden Child is the first of several Fitzgerald novels to focus on a cultural institution and on a cast of characters who are, shall we say, not all devoted in equal measure to the good, the true, and the beautiful. In her second novel, *The Bookshop* (1978), set in 1959, a widow named Florence Green buys the Old House, a centuries-old building in her sleepy East Suffolk village, and turns it into a bookshop. Like Waring Smith, she is something of an innocent—a well-meaning, quietly plucky, but rather naïve adult with commendable moral and artistic instincts but an insufficient awareness of the degree to which other people are driven by selfishness, jealousy, and power-hunger. In place of the self-seeking museum officials in *The Golden Child*, *The Bookshop* gives us Mrs. Gamart, a society matron who, seeing her role as the local doyenne of culture threatened by Florence's shop, resurrects a plan to turn the site into an arts center and proceeds to use all her influence to have the building confiscated by the government. How does Florence react? If one expects her to be yet another mild-mannered, virtuous underdog who triumphs over the villainous powers-that-be, one will be disappointed. Nor should one expect her motives to be overly clear: as it is not entirely obvious why Waring Smith works in a museum and not, say, in some civil-service job, neither can one understand why Florence Green, of all people, has decided to go into the bookselling business. Confronted with the newly published *Lolita*, after all, she can't even decide whether to stock it—"I haven't been trained to understand the arts," she explains, "and I don't know whether a book is a masterpiece or not"—and has to turn to the well-read village recluse for an opinion. How, one cannot but wonder, did such a woman fasten upon the idea of opening a bookshop?

Here, as in *The Golden Child*, Fitzgerald contemplates with a jaundiced eye the rampant popularization of culture. An entire wall of Florence's shop is covered by paperbacks: "cheerfully coloured, brightly democratic, they crowded the shelves in well-disciplined ranks. They would have a rapid turnover and she had to approve of them; yet she could remember a world where only foreigners had been content to have their

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books bound in paper. The Everymans, in their shabby dignity, seemed to confront them with a look of reproach." A whole cultural outlook—the sort that some might call elitist and xenophobic—is conveyed in this brief passage. Nor is this the only time that Fitzgerald weighs in on such issues. When Mrs. Gamart tells Florence that she and others in the village have long wanted to turn the Old House into an arts center, Florence at first thinks it possible to have both a bookshop and an arts center in the building and innocently decides that, in order to run the latter efficiently, "she herself would have to take some sort of course in art history and music appreciation—music was always appreciated, whereas art had a history." The aged village recluse, meanwhile, is unimpressed by Mrs. Gamart's plans: "How can the arts have a centre?"

The Bookshop was followed by the Booker Prize-winning *Offshore* (1979), which has less in common with Fitzgerald's other early efforts than with her later works, and which I shall discuss in connection with them. It was succeeded by *Human Voices* (1980), a novel about wartime London—or, to be specific, about the BBC in 1940, a place where, as in the museum of *The Golden Child*, some officials are identified not by name but by title (a device which nicely underscores the importance to Fitzgerald of roles and responsibilities). A temperate, lightly plotted book, *Human Voices* covers a few months in the lives of two programming directors, the Director of Programme Planning (DPP) and the Director of Recorded Programming (RPD), and of several young men and women who serve as assistants. Most important of these assistants is Annie Asra, a Birmingham piano tuner's sensible daughter, who falls senselessly in love with the eccentric, middle-aged RPD. Given the promising situation—inside BBC headquarters during the Blitz!—a reader may well find himself frustrated at the lack of high drama in these pages. But the frustrations he will experience are those of life itself: Fitzgerald reminds us that heroism is not necessarily glamorous and is often, indeed, a matter of quiet dedication to monotonous tasks. She reminds us, too, that heroes, like saints, can be selfish and stupid, maddeningly quirky and abundantly flawed: though the Beeb's employees "bitterly complain[ed] about the shortsightedness of their colleagues, the vanity of the newsreaders, the remoteness of the Controllers and the restrictive nature of the canteen's one teaspoon," the Corporation's loyalty to the truth (despite temptations to conceal unpleasant facts for purposes of national morale) filled them with "a certain pride which they had no way to express, either then or since." In the end, the book is a tribute to the unsung and quintessentially English heroism of imperfect people.

At Freddie's (1982) is something of a tribute as well. Like *Human Voices*, it is an account of several months in the lives of several people; this time around, though, we're at the Temple School, a.k.a. Freddie's, an ever-destitute but widely revered London academy for child actors whose elderly founder and leader, Frieda Wentworth, a.k.a. Freddie, is a legendary figure in the theater world. Among the principal characters are two young teachers, one of whom falls in love with the other, and a pair of students, a brilliantly gifted nine-year-old named Jonathan and a vain, showoffy type (and future movie star) named Mattie. As Florence's bookshop is threatened by Mrs. Gamart, so Freddie's is endangered by a vulgar entrepreneur who wants to change it into a school for television-commercial actors; but, surprisingly, the real joker in the deck turns out to be Freddie herself, who, in her heart of hearts, proves to be devoted not to the theater but to the perpetuation, at any cost, of her own power. (Meanwhile, the school's talentless, lovestruck young teacher —whom Freddie hired only because he would accept low pay—proves to have great strength of character.) As if to emphasize that what ultimately matters is not fame or power but art, the novel concludes with a memorable glimpse of the one true artist in the place, Jonathan, who, interested not in celebrity but in the perfection of his craft,

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remains past dusk in the schoolyard, repeatedly practicing a leap from a wall for his role in *King John*.

Jonathan, we are told, "was born to be one of those actors who work from the outside inwards. To them, the surface is not superficial." The surface has never been superficial to Fitzgerald either, though there are times in *The Golden Child*, *The Bookshop*, *Human Voices*, and *At Freddie's* when her meticulous portraits don't communicate quite as much as she presumably wants them to. This is far less true of her other four novels, in which Fitzgerald, though no more than ever inclined to engage in extensive mind-reading, manages with far greater success to convey, for all her concision, a phenomenally rich sense of place and character and moral tone. These later novels (though they are not all strictly "later," since I include among them the third, *Offshore*) are more ambitious and ambiguous than those already discussed; Fitzgerald's vision seems larger, subtler, more complex. She focuses less on institutional than on family relations, and even reaches beyond England for her main settings; while infatuations figure in *Human Voices* and *At Freddie's*, moreover, such later books as *Innocence* and *The Gate of Angels* examine full-fledged romances and marriages.

Fitzgerald is also more explicit, in these later novels, about her interest in matters of the spirit. The niece of two eminent priests, she takes what might be described, to an extent, as a Christian view of her creations: she notes their transgressions and names them bluntly, even bitingly, but if she scorns the sin she has compassion for the sinner. Such words as "soul" and "saint" crop up frequently in her pages, though one might miss them because of the casual, colloquial way in which they are generally introduced. (In *Innocence*, for example, she describes the perturbed young hero as rushing out of a room "like a lost soul.") Fitzgerald is preoccupied, moreover, with the nature of innocence—its assets and liabilities, moral and practical, and the myriad forms it takes, whether in small children or in supposedly sophisticated adults—and emphasizes that innocence and righteousness do not necessarily go hand in hand. Sometimes her innocents are people who lack sufficient knowledge of the world; sometimes they are very worldly folk indeed—scientists, physicians, and journalists—who possess an overweening confidence in the ability of rational investigation to determine objective truth, and about whose smug, unquestioning reverence for such things as behaviorism and the scientific method Fitzgerald can be trenchantly sardonic. Surely one reason why she shrinks from directly rendering her novels' climactic events is that she is intensely aware of the difficulty of pinning down the precise truth of a human situation.

This is not to suggest, of course, that Fitzgerald's position is that of many a contemporary academic theorist who claims that nothing is knowable. On the contrary, she patently believes in truth, and believes, too, that fundamental human truths are worth pursuing. Yet she is hesitant to delve too deeply into the human soul. So heavily, indeed, does she rely on dialogue and physical action to convey character that at times one almost gets the impression that there is, to her, something unseemly about rummaging around too much inside a protagonist's head. In any event, her emphasis is invariably not on exploring her characters' souls but on examining their conduct in the company of others. When she makes general statements, accordingly—some of which are attributed to the narrator, others to various characters—they tend to be commentaries not on psychological but on social verities: "Morality is seldom a safe guide for human conduct." "Total approval is never convincing." "Honourable men are rare, but not necessarily interesting." "Politics and business can be settled by influence, cooks and doctors can only be promoted on their skill." Manifestly, these aphoristic remarks are the work of someone who is clear-eyed but funny about human failings, someone who has firm and unromantic convictions about art, life, and civilization. Yet her best

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novels are characterized by a reflectiveness, a probing curiosity, an acute awareness of the contingency of the human condition that separates her dramatically from the callow certitude of many a glib, solipsistic contemporary novelist.

Such is the case, certainly, with *Offshore*. Set in a community of Thames barges on London's Battersea Reach during the early 1960s, the book focuses on thirty-two-year-old Nenna James, a former music student who lives with her daughters, Martha and Tilda, on a barge named *Grace*. Nenna bought the barge, we learn, while her engineer husband, Edward, was in Central America on a construction job; Edward, now back in London and unwilling to join them in their unorthodox new residence, has instead taken a room in a drab-sounding neighborhood that Nenna can't even bring herself to visit: "In Christ's name, who ever heard of such a place?" Fitzgerald doesn't offer a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down verdict on all this. Nor does she tell us, in so many words, precisely why Nenna decided to move onto a barge and why she now obstinately refuses to give it up. (There are, significantly, no flashbacks to the marriage, of which we are offered the skimpiest, most objective record.) Doubtless the explanation is not a simple one, for Nenna is not a case study out of a textbook but a character who feels at every moment perversely, perplexingly, and poignantly real. By way of dialogue and gesture, however, and the occasional brief flashlight glimpse beneath Nenna's edgy, stubborn, and confused surface, Fitzgerald delicately plants in one's mind the notion that marriage has been for Nenna a string of failures and disappointments, including the frustration of her musical ambitions, and that the approach of middle age and the absence of Edward have combined to bring to a head her long-suppressed fears and resentments and to propel her into extreme, perhaps even reckless, action. In moving offshore, Nenna has moved away from the mainstream of middle-class existence, to experiment with a life on the margins that may, in her mind, provide a gratifying tie to her musical ambitions of yore and to her passing youth.

In addition to bringing Nenna and her daughters to vibrant life in very little space, Fitzgerald affords us engaging glimpses of the other lives on the Reach—those of Willis, an old man whose leaky boat finally sinks; Maurice, a sad, aimless gay man; and Richard, a married business executive with whom Nenna has a brief fling. Though the sometimes protracted episodes involving these other characters cannot be defended on strict grounds of dramatic structure, they don't feel superfluous: on the contrary, they all help to fill in the picture of life on the Reach, to illuminate the odd little corner of the world into which Nenna has chosen to withdraw. It should be noted that the Thames functions here in several ways: not only as a symbol of sexuality (especially female sexuality) and of the unremitting flow of time, but also as an image, paradoxically, both of life (it is, note well, a river of life on which the heroine and her children are kept afloat by a boat named *Grace*) and (as in *Huckleberry Finn*) of escape from life and its responsibilities. A number of events here might be interpreted symbolically: for instance, when a priest comes to ask why the girls haven't been attending school, he slips on *Grace*'s deck. But Fitzgerald isn't insistent about such symbolic implications, and the novel's details are presented so realistically that a reader might well overlook their possible figurative significance.

Much the same might be said about *Innocence* (1986), which chronicles the romance and marriage of two bullheaded young Italians in 1955. Salvatore Rossi is a peasant boy from a rural village who has grown up to be a brilliant and successful "nerve doctor" in Florence. Excitable, anti-religious, and devoted to science, he is the son of two parents with their own strong attachments: his mother (who named him for the Savior) was a devout Christian, his father an equally devout Communist. Indeed, it was a traumatic boyhood visit to his father's hero, Antonio Gramsci—who, by

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that time, was a hideous, broken-down old jailbird—that made Salvatore resolve never to risk his life, health, or freedom for his principles or to be emotionally dependent on anyone. His beloved is Chiara, a beautiful student at an English convent school who is the daughter of an ancient and noble Florentine family, the Ridolfi.

In the novel's opening pages, we are vouchsafed an anecdote from Ridolfi history. In the sixteenth century, the Ridolfi were midgets; a beloved daughter, kept within the walls of the family estate so that she would be protected from the knowledge of her difference from others, had a mute midget playmate who unexpectedly began to grow to normal size; whereupon the Ridolfi child, to protect her friend from the knowledge of her apparent differentness from others, had the girl's eyes put out and her legs amputated at the knees. Neither Fitzgerald nor any of her characters ever spells out a moral to this anecdote, or explains the implied thematic link between it and the story of Salvatore and Chiara; but over the course of the novel the anecdote resonates frequently, the pitch changing ever so slightly every time. Part of the point, certainly, is that innocence, far from being a guarantee of virtue, can be a wellspring of cruelty and horror; that people are capable of doing foolish and even wicked things to those they love in an attempt to improve them, to make them conform to some vision of normality or rightness; that the innate differences between people, whether of stature or sensibility, can form insuperable barriers between them; and that, in some way or another, the attributes of one's parents remain ineradicable, perhaps even disfiguring, elements of one's own identity. Family is character; family is fate.

The lovers' first encounter in *Innocence* might well be an episode from a romance novel. Introduced during an intermission at the Teatro della Pergola after a crude performance of Brahms's Third Violin Sonata, Salvatore asks Chiara politely whether she enjoyed the music; she replies: "Of course not." He falls for her immediately, and she is so taken with him that she lets him lead her out into the rain before returning to the auditorium. (Like Forster's *A Room with a View*, this novel is about a capable, experienced young man of humble origins who, amid picturesque Italian settings, introduces a sheltered, well-to-do girl to sensuality in Italy.) But nothing else here is remotely reminiscent of a romance novel. Obsessed with Chiara, Salvatore makes no effort to see her. Months pass; finally she appears at his office, only to be upbraided by him for coming. She flees; he writes her a letter, then tears it up. Perplexed by his behavior, Chiara invites Barney, a no-nonsense English schoolmate, to Italy and asks her advice. At Barney's suggestion, she arranges for herself and Salvatore to be invited to lunch by mutual acquaintances, but they both hesitate to go; the vacillations that precede their meeting are recounted in elaborate detail.

Not so, however, the ensuing affair, which begins offstage and is recounted very succinctly. Ditto the first months of Salvatore and Chiara's marriage: instead of seeing them together, we hear about their relationship in conversations between Chiara and Barney (who tells her: "You're just an innocent who hopped into bed with the first man you saw when you got out of the convent") and between Salvatore and his friends. The narrator sums up the marriage in businesslike fashion: "Chiara and Salvatore quarrelled, but not so successfully as they made love. Chiara had no gift for quarrelling at all and could scarcely understand how it was done, nor, really, had Salvatore, since his argument was with himself, and he was therefore bound to lose. . . . They loved each other to the point of pain and could hardly bear to separate each morning." The main problem with the marriage, as this quotation suggests, lies with Salvatore, who is unable to enjoy the blessing of his and Chiara's love; insecure, irrational, and suspicious, he comes to feel that he was unwise to tell Chiara everything about himself, and is sure that she doesn't need him, that she must be unhappy, that she's a dilettante

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when it comes to romance, and that she's secretly arranging to regain the family property that he sold in order to afford to marry her.

A friend opines that Salvatore has "a sickness and craziness about him because he has cut himself off from the place where he was born." (Note the words *cut off*—a reminder of the story of the leg amputation.) Salvatore, for his part, feels "that both Marta [his ex-mistress] and Chiara took advantage of him by attacking him with their ignorance, or call it innocence. A serious thinking adult had no defence against innocence because he was obliged to respect it, whereas the innocent scarcely knows what respect is, or seriousness either." But who's the innocent here? At one point Salvatore says that the only thing he hopes to be spared is "to know exactly what kind of man I am": what is he hoping for here, after all, except to retain a kind of innocence? One of the things that this novel is about, ultimately, is the ways in which people deprive themselves and others out of innocence—an innocence that, paradoxically, may generate guilt, and that may take the form of deficient self-knowledge or a lack of worldly experience. Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale" poses the question: "Which was the mooste fre?" Perhaps one question that *Innocence* seeks to pose is: which is the more innocent, Salvatore or Chiara? "What's to become of us?" Salvatore asks a cousin of Chiara's in the novel's closing pages. "We can't go on like this." "Yes, we can go on like this," comes the reply. "We can go on exactly like this for the rest of our lives." And that's part of the point in this novel, which concludes on a note of hope but intimates that, people being the troubled and troublemaking creatures that they are, the very notion of a happily-ever-after ending—or, for that matter, of an innocence without unsavory repercussions—is a patent absurdity.

What with its sumptuous settings, its colorful cast of aristocrats, politicians, and Vatican priests, its Latin outbursts of temper and its torrid passions (which run several degrees hotter than the passions in any previous Fitzgerald novel), *Innocence* differs significantly from its predecessors. Some reviewers seem to have thought it odd for so English a writer as Fitzgerald to set a story in Italy, but it makes a certain kind of sense: there's something in a pure English temperament that just naturally assumes a tempestuous, irrational romance of this sort should be set in hotter climes. (Think of *Romeo and Juliet.*)

Fitzgerald's Italian novel was followed by her Russian novel. *The Beginning of Spring* (1988) is set in Moscow on the eve of revolution. It is 1913, and Frank Reid, the Russian-born English owner of a printing firm, has been abandoned by his wife, Nellie, for reasons that are apparently a mystery to him. Hiring a taciturn young woman named Lisa to take care of their three children, he asks her to cut her hair, presumably because he finds her attractive and wants her to look less tempting (shades of the Ridolfi mutilation!). More than ever in Fitzgerald, there are abundant references here to God and the soul: if Fitzgerald seems, at least in part, to have set *Innocence* in Italy so that she could write about extravagant passions, she seems to have set *The Beginning of Spring* in Russia so that she could allow certain of her characters to converse at length, and with relative unrestraint, about spiritual matters. Frank, who does "everything quickly and neatly, without making a business of it," considers himself a rational being, but isn't sure: "Perhaps, Frank thought, I have faith, even if I have no beliefs." More openly metaphysical-minded than Frank is his accountant, Selwyn Crane, a religious poet and Tolstoy disciple who is described by Frank's servant as "a good man, . . . always on his way from one place to another, searching out want and despair." "If you have a fault," Selwyn tells Frank, "it is that you don't grasp the importance of what is beyond sense or reason." Yet, as the beloved Freddie turns out to be the resident demon of *At Freddie's*, so it is the seemingly righteous Selwyn who proves to have been the reason for Nellie's disappearance: as he confesses re-

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morsefully, they were having an affair and arranged to run off together—a plan that he did not repudiate until after Nellie had already deserted Frank.

The Beginning of Spring is set in the year before the outbreak of World War I; Fitzgerald's most recent novel, *The Gate of Angels*—which, though published in England in 1990, did not appear in America until this winter—takes place a year earlier. (One can well understand why Fitzgerald would want to set two novels in that period, which marks the boundary between the British Empire-dominated world of the Victorians and Edwardians and the modern era.) Like *Innocence*, it follows two strong-willed young people down their separate paths to each other and through a romance marked by disagreement, misunderstanding, and estrangement; as in both *Innocence* and *The Beginning of Spring*, it is not until the very last sentence that Fitzgerald, in the most matter-of-fact way, introduces the possibility of reconciliation.

Fitzgerald gives us straightforward accounts of both these young people's lives. Fred Fairly, a former choirboy and the son of a provincial rector, has been appointed a Junior Fellow at the fictitious Saint Angelicus, the smallest college at Cambridge; known colloquially as Angels, the college is a sort of secular monastery whose charter forbids its fellows, all mathematicians and scientists, to marry. Like Salvatore, Fred is basically a good sort, a well-educated man of science with a callow reverence for rationality. "These are wonderful years in Cambridge," says Fred; science is in its glory days, and he has decided to clear his mind "of any idea that could not be tested through physical experience." Since this includes, to his way of thinking, the idea of God, he has decided that he is no longer a Christian. Informed of this decision, his father is not surprised: "When you told me that you wanted to study Natural Sciences at university, which led, fortunately I suppose, to your present appointment, I took it for granted that you would sooner or later come to the conclusion that you had no further use for the soul." To be sure, like any good scientist, Fred is willing to keep an open mind about these things: "He had no acceptable evidence that Christianity was true, but he didn't think it impossible that at some point he might be given a satisfactory reason to believe in it."

The young lady for whom Fred falls is also something of a rationalist. A lower-class girl from the south of London, Daisy has studied to be a nurse because she wants to know how the body works. She is at once hard-nosed and sympathetic: "Hating to see anyone in want, she would part without a thought with money or possessions, but she could accept only with the caution of a half-tamed animal." Dismissed from a London hospital for violating professional bounds to help a patient, she travels to Cambridge in search of a job and is followed by a sleazy middle-aged newspaper reporter, Kelly, who seeks to take advantage of her helplessness. The two of them are bicycling to the hotel where he plans to rob her chastity when they—and Fred, who happens to be directly behind them on his Royal Sunbeam—are knocked unconscious in a road accident caused by a carter named Saul (which, if one chooses to notice it, may be taken as an allusion to Saint Paul, *né* Saul of Tarsus, the transfiguring event of whose life also took place on a road). Awakening next to Daisy in a strange bed, Fred is smitten as quickly as Salvatore is with Chiara.

Several of the signal characteristics of Fitzgerald's fiction are more pronounced in this novel than in any of its predecessors. For one thing, if her books have always tended toward brevity and directness—their chapters short, their style plain, crisp, and unadorned—the tendency is even more manifest in *The Gate of Angels*. Also, though her protagonists have often been quite calculatedly ordinary, Fred and Daisy, with their humble backgrounds and almost parodically down-to-earth names, could hardly seem less exotic—to an English reader, anyway. (They may seem especially so to readers who come to the new novel with vivid memories of the foreign settings and characters of

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Innocence and *The Beginning of Spring*.) Moreover, Fitzgerald's powers of selectivity and compression are at their zenith here. Finally, if Fitzgerald's preoccupation with spiritual matters has been increasingly evident in her last few novels, such matters figure even more prominently in *The Gate of Angels*, and her apprehension of that which lies beyond sense and reason is communicated with greater force and beauty than ever before in her oeuvre. Partly because her description of each homely particular is well-nigh allegorical in its simplicity—and partly because the place names that she chooses to include (e.g., Jesus Lane, Christ's Pieces, Bishop's Leaze) serve to remind us, in an unaggressive way, that everything around us is a part of the divine creation—the reader of *The Gate of Angels* begins to feel, before too long, as if the novel's very landscape is gently but unmistakably aglow with its own miraculousness. And what is the significance of the wind that stirs up in the first line of the novel, and then again at the very end, when, after having resolved to part forever, Fred and Daisy meet once more by what may or may not be purest chance? This is, let it be said, the rarest of novels in which an eleventh-hour coincidence, because it is in perfect figurative harmony with all that has gone before, feels not at all like an authorial contrivance but like a genuine moment of grace, a gentle brush with the hand of providence—a still, small voice in the madding crowd.

One of the things that figure importantly here is a historical anecdote. Early on, Fitzgerald tells us that Saint Angelicus "had no real existence at all, because its foundation had been confirmed by a pope, Benedict XIII, who after many years of ferocious argument had been declared not to be the Pope at all." Obstinately, Benedict refused to accept the verdict and spent the rest of his very long life holding papal audiences. Fred, we are told, is also obstinate: "Like Benedict XIII himself, he might be asked to admit defeat, but would never recognise it as legitimate, or even respectable." This story of Saint Angelicus's founding, like that of the Ridolfi ancestors at the beginning of *Innocence*, resonates throughout the book. By suggesting that the college has "no real existence," Fitzgerald is playing something of an ontological game with the reader: for the college *doesn't* exist, of course, outside the world of the novel; but it *does* exist within the novel, Pope or no Pope. But what does it mean to say that it exists when the narrator says that it doesn't? Fitzgerald's game forces the reader to attend throughout the book to questions of reality and unreality, and, in particular, to the delicate intimations of another reality—one of spirit—with which Fitzgerald permeates her narrative. This is all very effectively done, and indeed it points to what may be this author's most distinctive achievement: namely, her ability to combine, in one novel, a convincingly detailed realistic surface with a sublime sense of the transcendent. In none of her novels has this been quite as elegantly and affectingly accomplished as in *The Gate of Angels*.

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Jon Wiener's pop Marxism

by Ronald Radosh

Jon Wiener, professor of history at the University of California, Irvine, and a frequent contributor to *The Nation*, has now put together a collection of his essays on history and politics from the last decade.[1] The volume's title, *Professors, Politics and Pop*, is appropriate. It underscores the relation that currently exists between the academy and pop culture under the influence of the radical Left. Professor Wiener's prose style is itself an illustration of the course that this radical school of American history has taken in the direction of pop writing and what in the Sixties was proudly hailed as the "new journalism." It is a style in which opinion is often a substitute for scholarship, and ideology rather than historical evidence determines the nature of intellectual inquiry.

Consider, for example, Professor Wiener's own account of the changes that have overtaken the writing of American history. In a much-discussed essay, "Radical Historians and the Crisis in American History, 1959-1980," he complains that even in the late 1980s the academy had extended only a "limited acceptance" to this radical history. Yet he contradicts this claim in his conclusion to the article, boasting that "radical history in the age of Reagan occupied the strongest position it has ever held in American universities." This has occurred, Professor Wiener allows, not because the profession was forced to recognize "good work even when it challenged the mainstream." On the contrary, it occurred because the agitations of the Sixties overthrew the very definition of what constituted responsible scholarship: "The profession's agenda was transformed when established historians observed—and experienced—the social and political upheavals that swept American society and politics. . . . Today's radical history arose in a particular historical context, against the background of the civil rights and antiwar movements."

In other words, Professor Wiener asks us to accept an idea of history in which historians—who by definition are students of the past—cannot write about their areas of specialization unless they accept the political ethos of the Sixties. He even argues that, because of its distance from this radical agenda, traditional historical scholarship was a failure.

This article is itself a telling example of what has happened to the field of history in this country. Originally published in *The Journal of American History*—once the venerable organ of the highly respected Mississippi Valley Historical Association and now the journal of the Left-dominated Organization of American Historians—it epitomizes the tendentiousness of the new history that Professor Wiener celebrates. Commenting on the essay, Christopher Lasch suggested that radical historians came to be accepted not because the nature of the historical en-

1 *Professors, Politics and Pop*, by Jon Wiener; Verso, 366 pages, $29.95.

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terprise had changed but because they tended to write books "just as narrow, tedious and predictable as the books written by their ideological opponents," i.e., what Professor Lasch calls "unmistakably academic" works that placed them well within the confines of the profession.

In another response to Professor Wiener's article, the historian Carl N. Degler pointed out that despite an early hostile response to the work of some radical historians, their methods as well as their careers have in fact flourished, while denunciatory reviewers have been ignored or forgotten. The real question, he noted, is "*why* radical history has captured the commanding heights of the American field." It is perhaps ironic that Professor Wiener's collection of articles reminds us that the answer to this question has nothing to do with intellectual superiority, or even intellectual accomplishment. On the contrary, according to Wiener the radicals have come to dominate the profession because they have outnumbered their opponents. They have packed the profession. And what matters to these radical recruits to the profession is not the adequacy of a given interpretation to the historical facts but its propaganda value and ideological coloring.

Consider the 1981 controversy about the Marxist historian David Abraham. In his book *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, Professor Abraham argued that big business in Germany had played the major role in destroying the republic and preparing Hitler's ascension to power. The book was widely praised until the Yale historian Henry A. Turner, Jr., revealed that Professor Abraham had seriously misused his sources to reach this conclusion: that in fact his book contained scores of incorrect quotations and betrayed a wholesale misrepresentation of sources. What irritates Professor Wiener, however, is not Professor Abraham's misuse of his data but what he describes as the attempt by "two senior historians"—Professor Turner and Gerald A. Feldman of the University of California, Berkeley—to destroy "the career of a young Marxist historian."

By referring to Professor Abraham as a Marxist, Professor Wiener has conjured up the image of a hidebound profession persecuting a good scholar because of his political views. He attacks the motives of Professor Abraham's critics, casting Professor Abraham himself as an embattled young scholar hounded for personal and ideological reasons. He quotes Natalie Zemon Davis, the Princeton historian and future president of the American Historical Association, who called the criticism of Abraham's work "reminiscent of McCarthyite hysteria." Forgotten is the only real intellectual issue: Professor Abraham's misuse of sources and the distortion of historical evidence.

Professor Wiener acknowledges that Professor Abraham had mistranslated, misdated, and misattributed documents "in a way that distorted" their meaning. That is, the critics were right. Yet none of this seems of urgent concern to Professor Wiener. On the contrary, he asserts that Henry Turner mounted his criticism because "his own book had been pre-empted by a younger scholar whose Marxism he despised."

What Wiener has provided us with here is a textbook example of Soviet-style misinformation. Instead of addressing himself to the meaning of the charges levied by Professor Turner against Professor Abraham—charges he acknowledges to have been essentially accurate—he impugns Professor Turner's motives. Because Professor Turner dared to criticize a political comrade, Professor Wiener claims that he is persecuting a Marxist who has successfully challenged his—Professor Turner's—thesis. Whatever Professor Abraham's work may amount to—it was debated at length in the pages of *The New York Review of Books* and *The New York Times Book Review*—most scholars have concluded that Abraham was unable to refute Professor Turner's criticisms.

Professor Wiener nevertheless persists in maintaining that "Marxism [was] indeed an issue," arguing that evidence itself is unimportant, since David Abraham's book "is not an analysis of the growth of Nazism but a structuralist study of the success and failure

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of capitalist democracy." The issue is thus transformed from a debate about historical accuracy into a controversy between "those who seek to identify broad levels of causation"—the noble task attempted by Professor Abraham—"and those who confine themselves to a chronicle of events," the low road allegedly taken by Professor Abraham's critics.

It turns out, however, that Professor Wiener is not so charitable or highminded when dealing with historians whose politics he disparages. A case in point is the controversy over Norman Davies, the distinguished British historian of Poland. Having been offered a chair in history at Stanford University, Professor Davies arrived in Palo Alto only to discover that Stanford had reneged on its offer. Davies sued on the grounds that he was denied the appointment because of his political views. This is precisely the course that David Abraham took in defending himself. In this case, Professor Wiener goes through elaborate contortions to argue that objections to Professor Abraham's scholarship were but a smokescreen for a political vendetta. But when it comes to Norman Davies, Professor Wiener reverses his argument. Is his historical scholarship so good, he asks, "that discrimination becomes a plausible explanation for Stanford's rejection of him?" Apparently not. Although Professor Wiener characterizes Professor Davies as "being among the world's leading historians of Poland," he goes on to criticize him for his "*intensely anti-Soviet bias*" (Emphasis added). Professor Wiener is particularly irked by Professor Davies's claim that the "crimes of the Nazis" were "parallel" to those of the Soviets. After all, Professor Wiener writes, only half a million Poles died in Soviet camps, compared to six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Why would anyone write about Poland with an anti-Soviet bias?

The point is that Professor Wiener believes that his political disagreements with Professor Davies—i.e., with Davies's "anti-Soviet" bias—are just cause for denying him an academic appointment. He concludes that Davies "distorts evidence to fit his conclusions"—precisely what David Abraham did. Professor Wiener does not even charge Norman Davies with poor scholarship, only with producing a politically unacceptable interpretation of history. In this case, Professor Wiener writes that "faulty interpretation is the equivalent of bad scholarship."

Professor Wiener's collection is filled with examples of this kind of double standard. His list of good guys includes Marxists, radical historians, feminist historians, gay historians, John Lennon—whom he claims wanted rock music to become a "potent political force"—and, surprisingly, the *old* Frank Sinatra, who, according to Wiener, "didn't pal around with rich Republicans" and who "had moved much closer to organized left-wing political activity."

Professor Wiener's villains include feminist historian Rosalind Rosenberg, who dared to buck the trend and testify on behalf of Sears, Roebuck in a sex-discrimination case; the historian and former Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, for testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s; the Harvard economist and advisor to Boris Yeltsin Jeffrey Sachs, for instituting "capitalist shock therapy" in what used to be "a worker's state"; the National Association of Scholars, for opposing the politicization of the academy; the *new* Frank Sinatra, whose "politics are solidly conservative"; the Olin Foundation; and, of course, *The New Criterion*. Professor Wiener sees something sinister in the Olin Foundation's support of scholars such as the distinguished French historian François Furet at the University of Chicago or its support of David Horowitz and Peter Collier's "Second Thoughts" conferences, which are incorrectly said to have featured only "1960s apostates." Horowitz and Collier in fact brought to their conferences many liberals and even radicals, including Julius Lester, David Hawk, Barry Rubin, and Jeffrey Herf. Unlike Professor Wiener, they obviously are not reluctant to engage in a contest of ideas.

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Professor Wiener is very impatient with conferences that do not cleave to politically correct dogma and monolithic views. About a recent conference sponsored by the National Association of Scholars, for example, he charges that "it is the right-wing faculty who are filled with resentment, because they know it is they who have been marginalized"—pushed, it is claimed, into oblivion by the "energy and commitment of the academic left." That energy, he says, was on view at Harvard University in 1988 at a conference on "Anticommunism and the U.S.: History and Consequences," for which the conference's sponsors, the Institute for Media Analysis, proclaimed anti-Communism to be a "pathology which had become the civic religion of the US."

It was at this meeting that Joel Kovel, the Alger Hiss Professor of Politics at Bard College, explained that "the U.S. is weakening and has less capacity to force a megalomaniac ideology like anti-Communism." Also participating in the Harvard conference was Communist leader Angela Davis, a particular heroine of the New Left scholars, who conceded that "women wait on long lines in the USSR" but quickly added that in the U.S. they "wait on long lines in supermarkets." Professor Wiener quotes approvingly the comments made by one Judith Leblanc, national organization secretary of the American Communist Party, who observed that while people believed the country had become more conservative under Reagan, "the Communist Party has a more accurate feel for where the people are. . . . Mass thinking is shifting to the left." These and other gems of wisdom, he gloats, were funded by "ecologist Abby Rockefeller," with ice cream "donated by Ben & Jerry's." Corporate funding is OK, you see, so long as it comes from those with politically correct views.

Professor Wiener's book is itself, of course, a compendium of politically correct assertions. The SDS is said to have been correct in the Sixties for refusing to reject Communists from their ranks; the North Vietnamese "resistance to American imperialism *was* heroic"; the counterculture did not undermine the New Left with its nihilism, rather, "the counterculture put into practice many of the key political values of the New Left"; etc., etc.

Among such "key political values" is the identification of rock music with revolution and Left politics, an identification that allows Professor Wiener to claim John Lennon as a potent political leader of a nascent revolutionary Left. But, once again, he wants it both ways. Even as he hails Lennon as an important revolutionary leader he condemns the FBI for tracking Lennon's every move. Didn't they understand that John Lennon was only a musician? Professor Wiener does not seem to understand that in attributing such immense political influence to Lennon he is guilty of the same error of which he accused the FBI bureaucrats.

About cultural matters, as about the writing of history, Professor Wiener employs a simple standard: left-wing is good, conservative is bad. To declare one's political views is sufficient to win praise or invite condemnation. What are important are ideology and numbers. The "neocons," he writes, are right about one thing: there's a tremendous gap between "the political currents of the Age of Reagan and the intellectual life of the universities." In this "contested terrain," Professor Wiener asserts, the "intellectual strength of the left" has been proven triumphant. Judging from his own evidence, this triumph has been won by left-wing academic friends giving positions and prizes to their own, whether intellectually deserving or not. One might say that, after the 1960s, New Left scholars—having failed to stimulate the kind of history they wanted to see made in the streets—decided in effect to rewrite history. They counted on academic tenure to protect them not only from their conservative adversaries but from historical reality itself. Part of the crisis in American culture today is that this development has populated our college and university classrooms with ideologues like Jon Wiener and our library shelves with books like *Professors, Politics and Pop.*

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Poems
by Donald Justice & Dick Allen

Banjo dog variations

Tramps on the road: floating clouds.
—old Chinese poem

1

Agriculture and Industry
Embraced in public on a wall—
Heroes in shirt-sleeves! Next to them
The average man felt small.

2

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
By Vassar girls surrounded.
They harmonized expertly; oh,
Their little true hearts pounded.

Joe went on smiling.

3

Cold—and smoke curled up from the tubs . . .
I thought I saw what Trotsky saw,
A friendly cossack wink; and then
His friends brought down their clubs.

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4

The moon broke through the clouds so full
It scared the bunch of us, I swear,
Like the sudden torch of a bull.
Oh, we laughed about it afterwards.

5

And out of dirty fists sometimes
Would bloom the melancholy harp.
Then low-low-low in the gon-doh-lah
We swayed beneath our tarp.

And far lights moving in and out of rain.

6

The train had just slowed for a crossing when
Out from the shadows jumped a hundred men.
With baseball bats and iron bars
They persuaded us back onto the cars.

Cheyenne that would have been.

7

We read our brothers' shirts for lice
And moved around with the fruit,
Went north to Billings for the beets
And had three good days in the jail at Butte.

8

We chalked our names on white cliffsides,
High up, where only eagles dwelled.
Whenever a truck went by below,
The earth trembled like a woman held.

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9

And we passed fields of smoking stumps
Where goats sometimes or ponies grazed.
Abandoned tractors leaned against the sky
Like giant fists upraised.

10

But if we bent our knees it was
To drink from a creek's rust-colored slime,
And splash our chests with it, and rub our eyes,
And wake into another world and time.

11

Let us go then, you and me,
While the neon bubbles upward ceaselessly
To lure us down back streets and alleyways,
Where we may wander and be lost for days,
Many hours and many days.

A cup of coffee; afterwards a hymn.

12

Once we stood on a high bluff,
Lights fanning out across the bay.
A little ragged band of Christs we were,
And tempted—but we turned away.

13

And didn't I see you Saturday night,
After the paycheck from the mill,
Bearing a pot of store-bought lilies home,
One budding still?

Ah, oh, my banjo dog!

—Donald Justice

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Homefront

Sunflowers grew so tall in the Coshburns' garden,
ten, twelve feet before a night windstorm
flattened them, decapitating some
(whose heads we found floating in the road,
and dangling from the wire mesh of a rabbit warren),
they frightened us . . . as if they were children who become
adults too soon, the darkness at their roots
sensed by other children—as I remember
sensing the coming beauty of Nancy Parker,
the death of Billy Meade. The sunflowers
grew uglier and uglier, a dozen higher ones
with faces descending at us from between
invisible shoulders, faces grotesquely swaying
on horrible stalks. And yet the Coshburns
seemed not to notice. Blithely, they beckoned us
closer and closer. Look up and see the sun,
they said. Don't you wish that you and you
could grow so tall. The night they fell,
moths bumped our windowscreens, the radio
went static, then dead. My mother screamed
at her clothesline. From the upstairs porch
of our summer cottage, lightning serifs melting
all over the sky, I watched the Coshburns' garden
as the sunflowers, one by one, went down,
splayed like compass points; and I was glad
the forces beyond us were protecting us
even in the small towns of upstate New York,
in 1945, in that hot war-torn July.

—Dick Allen

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Letter from Paris

L'Etat culturel

by Katherine Knorr

As the year ended, France's state-owned classical-music station started making mildly alarming announcements. A new France-Musique was coming, said a deep male voice, the kind usually heard in beer commercials, and listeners would find that music had never "touched" them so "closely." Various on-the-air producers used the traditional New Year's Eve greetings to announce they were being moved to time-slot Siberia or dropped altogether, and some made bitter speeches.

There was some reason for alarm. One way of bringing music closer to listeners was to multiply celebrity sound bites, as when movie executive Daniel Toscan du Plantier told us what he has on his record shelf at home. Then there are the man-in-the-street interviews, one of which resulted in something like this: "Mozart year didn't matter to me, I'm not interested in that kind of music."

A new boss was facing the fact that the station had been losing audience share to Radio-Classique, which broadcasts the sort of classical elevator music that people here call *musique d'accompagnement*. To listeners who know France-Musique and the immense erudition of many of its producers, not only in classical music but also in jazz, this seemed puzzling. By its nature the station does not and never will have a mass audience: marketing gimmicks can do nothing to change that.

Thus came another salvo in this country's cultural wars, where the battles are mostly fought on silly ground—Is graffiti art? Why can't the French sing rock 'n' roll? But the ultimate *casus belli* concerns the role of government in protecting and perhaps nurturing the arts and—in some wider way—that nebulous concept, "culture."

In the event, changes at France-Musique were limited, but they were indicative of the cynical populism that has animated so much of this government's cultural performance, from the Bastille Opera's brief career as "modern and popular" (prices are now modern, but not popular) to the ongoing battle over a new national library.

This debate, so French on its surface, is also about the United States, and whether it is a good or bad model for a modern democratic society. Despite Culture Minister Jack Lang's famous remarks about American cultural imperialism, he has done a great deal to import American pop culture, most recently rap and "graffiti art."

More profoundly, in the last twenty years or so France has imported some American-style approaches to education. Thus one finds a new interest in business "skills," attempts to "open" classrooms and make things more "relevant," efforts to let children learn at their own pace, etc.: you've heard it all before. France has also imported American culture in the form of food and even home-building. All this has altered not just the streets of Paris but the deepest

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countryside, where incongruous houses with two-car garages rise above well-trimmed lawns. An American arriving for the first time in France might not recognize this, but one who knew France thirty or even twenty years ago would find it now bathing in throw-away consumerism and mass-marketing jingles.

The French often seem slightly comical to Americans, who tend not to be interested in history, and many Americans seem to find it difficult to understand how attached French intellectuals are to France's greatness, intellectual and spiritual. At any rate, the current battles go to the heart of that feeling of lost grandeur, just as do the peculiar but very public battles over Franglais or changes in orthography.

In the government, one finds Lang's frenetic race to promote all sorts of "modern" artistic events in the name of making sure that France is not left behind in a kind of artistic race-to-the-moon. Among intellectuals, Left and Right, one finds varying degrees of dissatisfaction with "mass culture" and the dispersion of government attention and funds into things that might better be termed "leisure activities." In all cases, America, or at least some French idea of America, tends to be the bogeyman. This isn't really anti-Americanism; rather, it's a kind of "I've seen the future and I don't like it."

It is the conventional wisdom now to say that the French are morose. Certainly the economic situation is stagnant. There is a feeling of *fin de règne* about an aging president who did not appear at his best during the Gulf War and who is now engaged in furious battle with critics of his most heartfelt project, the so-called Trés Grande Bibliothèque in the Thirteenth Arrondissement. The Très Grande Bibliothèque is the last of Mitterrand's *grands travaux* (which have included the Pyramid at the Louvre, the Bastille Opera, the Arch at La Defense, and the Arab Institute) and the most embattled. It is also the one that offers the greatest risk for permanent harm to France's patrimony.

When in 1959 the French Culture Ministry was created for Charles de Gaulle's somewhat cumbersome friend André Malraux, the new minister saw France as offering a "third way" between the bourgeois culture of American capitalism and the totalitarianism in the east. It would be called *la culture démocratique* and he talked about how it would open to some poor adolescent the words of Corneille and of Hugo. But Malraux's Maisons de la Culture did not include libraries.

The new library is meant to offer facilities both to scholars and to the public at large, and to house all the books of the Bibliothèque Nationale in four L-shaped glass highrises. No one has questioned the need for a new national library, since the Bibliothèque Nationale is bulging at the seams, but every other aspect of the project has been assailed, notably the decision to store the books in the glass towers, which some people say will reduce them to dust. The government's response has been brusque, confused, and arrogant: the dangers are dismissed as so many complaints from cranky old men, even as "studies" and modifications are ordered. It's characteristic of a certain segment of the French Left to find suspect the opinion of anyone with expertise.

The Socialists were greeted as a breath of fresh air in 1981 after twenty-three years of uninterrupted Rightist governments, and Jack Lang's enthusiasm and pink shirts were similarly greeted with pleasure. The government decreed that France was a cultural desert and set about organizing all sorts of new "fêtes" with cultural themes, the more "multi-media" the better. Subsidies went to rock music and to "contemporary" art that ministry officials seemed to feel was shocking, revolutionary, avant-garde—anything but "bourgeois." Everyone was hip, everything was hyped, you couldn't be blamed for feeling you'd fallen into a gigantic and cheerful commercial for Club Med.

Marc Fumaroli, a historian with a chair at the Collège de France, says "culture" has become France's new state religion. He

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chooses the word carefully. André Malraux said that his Maisons de la Culture would be cathedrals, and it can be said that a kind of cultural crusade was launched by the state in the 1950s to capture holy cities from the "elite." In his recent book *L'Etat Culturel*,[1] Fumaroli identifies the heretics, the early sects, the first temples, and finally the full-blown state institution. Today, he says, the consumers of culture are bloated "democratic aristocrats."

All the government's efforts at bread-and-circuses are made in the name of democracy. There is a lot of talk about opening the arts to people who don't usually have access to them, whether by "decentralizing" culture to the provinces, "opening" it to the "underprivileged," or, essentially, making museums and concert halls more user friendly. The ministry's activities are trumpeted in a constant advertising campaign in which arts, crafts, and "events" are thrown into the same bag. The result is that everything is trivialized, the difference between substance and process disappears, and all is suffused with the anti-elite verbiage of the middle-class Marxist with tenure. No doubt some of the ministry's work is very fine, some of it enriches people's lives, but it's hard to tell amid the din.

In any event, Fumaroli counters that interest in the arts is inherently limited, and that the result of Malraux's grandiose words and Lang's street parties is simply to reduce the nation's cultural institutions to vacation villages. That is, while people can choose between cafeterias and regional restaurants and stores selling Mona Lisa scarves and Egyptian scarab rings, they are never bothered with the paintings, the sculptures, or the manuscripts themselves. Accordingly, while the Centre Pompidou consistently boasts huge attendance, actual attendance at the National Museum of Modern Art—which is, in principle, the heart if not the raison d'être of Beaubourg—is no higher than it was when this splendid collection was at the

1 *L'Etat Culturel: Une religion moderne*, by Marc Fumaroli; Editions de Fallois, 305 pages, 125 FF paper.

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Palais de Tokyo. People who go to the Centre Pompidou go to wander around, to lounge in the library, to walk through crowded, free exhibitions of modern artifacts, to see videos, or to listen vaguely to someone holding forth in the large central space.

As has been noted many times, the building hasn't aged well, and its exhibition program seems to grow ever less ambitious. Last year, shows in the Grande Galerie on the fifth floor included "Art & Publicité," which needs no explanation; a show that was meant to look at art through the eyes of André Breton; a Gisele Freund retrospective; and a Max Ernst exhibition that came from the Tate Gallery in London. Meanwhile, Beaubourg hosted a five-month festival of Warner Bros. movies.

If, as Fumaroli says, the public for fine art is limited, then all the government has done is to disrupt the lives of people who like to spend time in the Louvre or go to the theater by planting a wide variety of obstacles in their way: the jingles and fountains, the shops and fast-food outlets that they might encounter in an American shopping mall. The government keeps boasting about making France's cultural desert bloom. But where, after ten years, are the flowers? French television and education are both government controlled: the first is an embarrassing mediocrity, the second is in an apparently irretrievable tailspin.

In looking at the Culture Ministry, Fumaroli observes, "It is strange to note" that "the big cultural force with which it has been animated since 1959, with a second wind in 1981, found its great men not in artists, poets, or writers who owed it their eminence, but in political figures who live off it and award themselves its glory. We see Augustus and Maecenas, but where is Virgil? We see Julius II, but where is Michelangelo?" In fact, he writes, "Our historical monuments have been cleaned and restored; our museums have increased and been enriched; our theaters have multiplied; our Metro hallways ring with concerts and our walls announce party after party, commemoration after commemoration, Paris is invaded by massive Maisons de la Culture. But our educational establishments are in distress. Our international credit is dropping. . . . The standing of France is in the process of becoming that of first tourist power of the world, and Paris, despite its capital of intelligence and taste, a leisure center."

L'Etat Culturel is an angry book. It is also an immensely well-written one, and sometimes wickedly funny. This comes as a pleasant contrast to the wooden vocabulary of French technocrats, who are, of course, the people running the Culture Ministry. Fumaroli points to the constant use of "creator" and "creation" to describe the people the government is subsidizing to build public art in provincial towns or to record French versions of American pop music; he points to the sinister vocabulary of the "infrastructure," the cultural "spaces," and *salles polyvalentes.*

Fumaroli's emphasis in this book is on artistic institutions. He writes only briefly about education. In a conversation in his office, he talked more broadly about the role of government in the areas that make up a nation's culture. He looked back nostalgically to an educational system created under the Third Republic, a system that formed men broadly in the classics. In his view, people who had enjoyed such an education generally emerged with the intellectual wherewithal to stand up to a government that had gone astray; he cited in particular writers of novels who had sufficient breadth to speak authoritatively about the common realm, like André Gide when he returned from the Soviet Union disillusioned about the party line.

The French educational system suffers from a lot of the ideas that swept through education in the 1960s and 1970s and that have led in the United States to the current ideological wars in the liberal arts. Experiments to "open" the university in France have been dismal failures. Children's reading and writing performances are ever lower, and recent reforms to widen the baccalaureate have resulted in a lowering of stan-

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dards. Each time education becomes an issue, the usual silly schemes are called for —more computers, more video equipment—and the true causes are ignored. Some secondary institutions continue to tower above the rest; others, notably in the poorer banlieues, have simply become minimum security prisons from which the inmates escape to ride the trains into Paris with spray-paint cans.

Ten years after the Socialists' unexpected victory, Lang looks tired. The genial man in the pink shirt has turned from the good fight against American imperialism to a cameo role in the graffiti wars. Despite vandalism in the Metro, including a famous invasion of the Louvre station that cost $80,000 to clean and repair, he goes on praising the talent of the so-called "taggers," and organizing exhibitions of their work. When taggers whose work was being shown at the Palais de Chaillot recently boasted about renewed attacks on the Metro stations, there was a curious silence from the ministry. The transit authority's budget for cleaning up runs in the tens of millions of francs each year. More largesse from that unwitting Maecenas, the French taxpayer.

Traveling through France, one can see the ruined forts of the cultural crusade: all those prefab warehouses surrounded by forlorn parking lots and advertising for crafts fairs and sometimes "art." Then there are the monstrous undertakings of mayors who would substitute for their town's Renaissance magnificence some convention center that no one will ever rent, or who would broaden their citizens' minds with grotesque public art that rusts in windblown and unfrequented squares. The truth that people seem unwilling to face is that when the state goes beyond certain basic duties in education and in art, when it goes beyond conserving its patrimony, funding its grand museums, its opera, and its dance, it ventures onto dangerous ground. Fumaroli makes comparisons with the cultural totalitarianism of Left and of Right, of Moscow and of Berlin. He compares the establishment in the Sixties of national theaters—which promoted the "avant-garde" against the "bourgeois"—to the early days of the Terror, for in both cases later purges would claim early enthusiasts.

Indeed, even when the bureaucrats of culture aren't animated by the fury of cultural revolution, they are by definition the least capable of identifying what is genuinely new, creative, or lasting. Their patronage doesn't encourage art, it stultifies it. This particular set of bureaucrats prides itself on being modern, but of course it's fighting the last war. After all, who is this bourgeois it wants to shock? Is anyone shocked today by nonrepresentational art? Meanwhile, in the name of altruism—which is practiced in the name of the taxpayer—a little bit of glitz is dropped over the taggers in the form of an exhibition: a little bit of crepuscular, cocktail-party light is focused on a few young men.

Fumaroli, who is on the board of the review *Commentaire*, belongs to *la droite libérale* —that is, to a conservative force that would prefer a greater market role in the French economy, in the tradition of Raymond Aron, to whose memory he dedicates this book. He wishes for the state to return to its traditional role, to ensuring continuity, memory, tradition. In addition to ensuring the greatness of its educational system and preserving its artistic patrimony, Fumaroli's France would intervene only lightly in the act of creation, with tax breaks rather than subsidies or commissions.

Since he is writing a polemic, Fumaroli doesn't have to pretend balance. He's not suggesting that France go back to a time without movies or television or computers; but these very things make it difficult to imagine any turn away from the trivialization of art and education. When the poor suburbs of Paris exploded into violence last year, the "leaders" went straight for the cameras and knew how to use the sociological vocabulary of dispossession and alienation to provide the right noise for the evening news. They didn't learn it in school.

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Art

"Woman" & Gaston Lachaise

by Karen Wilkin

When Gaston Lachaise died, in 1935 at the age of fifty-three, he was something of a cult figure among a small circle of forward-looking New Yorkers. The French-born sculptor was championed by some of his adopted country's most progressive artists and supporters of the arts, including the poet e. e. cummings and the painter Marsden Hartley, along with Gilbert Seldes, a critic with a keen instinct for the most characteristic phenomena of the day, Henry McBride, one of the most enlightened American art critics of his generation, the collector Edward Warburg, and the art historian A. Hyatt Mayor. Lincoln Kirstein, as much a devotee of painting and sculpture as of dance, was a fan, as was the painter and patron George L. K. Morris, a founder of both *Partisan Review* and American Abstract Artists. Alfred Stieglitz admired Lachaise and had exhibited his work; as if to cement the relationship, Lachaise had done portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe and John Marin, artists closely associated with the pioneering photographer and dealer—as he had of Morris, Kirstein, and Gilbert Seldes's son. But for all the enthusiasm of these discriminating viewers, Lachaise remained relatively little known to a wider public. Less than a year before his sudden death, the Museum of Modern Art had mounted a retrospective exhibition of his sculpture, but, as McBride noted in his rueful obituary, few had paid attention.

These days, Lachaise is anything but obscure, yet even now he is known chiefly for a small portion of his work, mainly from the 1920s. His name immediately calls up a few highly recognizable large-scale sculptures, those sleek Amazons, all breasts, hips, and swelling bellies, who balance on tiny feet or levitate, arms outstretched and ankles neatly crossed. With their ample proportions, tapering limbs, and gleaming surfaces, Lachaise's bronze women of this type, such as the familiar *Elevation* of 1912-27 (the one on tiptoe) or *Floating Figure* of 1927 (the one with the thrust-out legs), look today like elegant period pieces, highbrow—and sexy—versions of Helen Hokinson's bosomy society ladies in those old *New Yorker* cartoons.

The maker of such sculptures seems an artist concerned more with modernity than with modernism. This is not to say that Lachaise was incapable of adventurous, inventive sculptures during these years. The stunning *Woman in a Chair* (1924) in the Paley Collection, on view at the Museum of Modern Art—a massive nude, her poised head crowned with a Spanish comb, sprawling in an even more massive cubic armchair—is proof of how good he could be in the early Twenties. The play of agile limbs and rounded torso against the unyielding, blocky "container" of the chair is unexpected and challenging, so much so that the sculpture, like any first-rate work, transcends its time. *Woman in a Chair* makes us think of a wide range of works, related in mood

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and spirit, but not necessarily having anything to do with the 1920s: Matisse's odalisques, Maillol's self-absorbed nymphs, Degas's woman in a tub, Rubens's voluptuous goddesses, Titian's heavy-limbed Venuses, and much more—even Manet's *Olympia*, with her confrontational stare.

Yet the streamlining and schematization of much of Lachaise's best-known work—that of the 1920s—seems prompted not by a desire to reinvent sculptural conventions but by a wish to adhere to then contemporary notions of stylishness—notions we recognize in the high-style decorative arts of the period. Sculptures of this type are further from the serene classicism of Maillol than they are from the up-to-the-minute mannerism of, say, Tamara de Lempicka. Lachaise's robust women, slender men, and perceptive portraits have more serious aspirations than Lempicka's glossy images of what would today be called Eurotrash, but they often share a flavor of self-conscious modishness.

But there is another side to Lachaise. An impressive body of work, principally from his last five years or so, proves him to have been a far more daring and innovative artist than we might have suspected. Lachaise's work of this period tests the limits of traditional figure sculpture, in terms of both form and content, as though he finally decided to concentrate single-mindedly on what truly obsessed him, without any veneer of convention or politeness. His late sculptures tread a narrow boundary between the expressive and the grotesque, teetering between erotic charge and near-indecency. Far from defining the female nude according to momentary, transient notions of style, these works present us with elemental symbols of femaleness. These assemblies of exaggerated, recombinant body parts become icons of sexuality, modernist versions of such unequivocal talismans as the Venus of Willendorf. Lachaise worries, too, at an inherited formal tradition, challenging by extremes of pose and fragmentation a time-honored language of sculptural terms that describe the human body. Individually, these sculptures are often astonishing; as a group, they make us completely revise any idea we may have formed of Lachaise on the basis of his more familiar work.

A recent exhibition at Salander-O'Reilly Galleries offered a welcome opportunity to see Lachaise whole. The miniature retrospective ranged from "signature" works, including *Elevation* and *Torso of Elevation* (1912-17, The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.), to less frequently seen heads and small figures from the Twenties, to a generous selection of provocative late works. The show emphasized particularly a series of virtually unknown sculptures, mostly from the last years of Lachaise's life, left as plasters at the time of his death and posthumously cast, with the authorization of the Lachaise Foundation, under the supervision of the sculptor Michael Steiner. (The issue of posthumous casting is always a delicate one, so I should point out that Steiner not only uses bronze with great expertise and sensitivity in his own sculpture but is also a long-time admirer of Lachaise with a profound knowledge of his work; the patinas and surfaces of the new casts looked splendid and completely at home among works in the show cast under Lachaise's direct supervision.)

As the Salander-O'Reilly exhibition made clear, Lachaise is a difficult artist to categorize. Although he lived just about all of his adult life in the U.S., he remained a profoundly European artist, one who kept faith with a traditional conception of sculpture as statue, no matter how radical the work of his last years. It's as though Lachaise came to modernism reluctantly, or, at least, through an indirect route. As Hilton Kramer pointed out in an essay written in 1967, Lachaise is elusive because his sculpture "embraces two worlds." Kramer argues persuasively that Lachaise's originality resides in "the ways in which the artist joined the heritage of one world with the peculiar pressures of the other."

Lachaise's rather odd history helps to explain some of these anomalies. Born in Paris in 1882 (which makes him an exact contem-

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porary of Braque's) he had a fairly orthodox education as a sculptor at the Académie Nationale des Beaux-Arts, and while still a student, before he was twenty, he began to exhibit in the annual Salons. Upon leaving the Beaux-Arts in 1904, he worked as a jewelry maker for that arbiter of design, René Lalique, in order to support himself, which may account for some of the modishness of stylized works like *Elevation* and some of the less successful figurine-like groups. His conventional education and his ties with the commercial world notwithstanding, the young sculptor's career was launched in a Paris that was beginning to pay attention to Cézanne, and that was home to artists who would soon revise irrevocably all notions of what painting or sculpture could be.

From 1906, Lachaise was in the United States, at first in Boston and then, after 1912, in New York, initially as assistant to the academic sculptor Paul Manship. There were no more submissions to the French Salons, but in 1913 Lachaise exhibited in the great artist-organized International Exhibition of Modern Art—the Armory Show—in New York. In 1916 he became an American citizen, and he spent the rest of his life in the U.S. Having left France just after Fauvism burst upon an unsuspecting public and shortly before the invention of Cubism, Lachaise was in the same position as any adventurous American artist of his generation: in a city largely hostile to advanced art, at one remove from the radical innovations of European painters and sculptors.

How did a promising young French sculptor end up in New York instead of Paris? As Lachaise later described it, his life was transformed, its future direction set, when, at the age of twenty, he met "a young American person who immediately became the primary inspiration which awakened my vision and the leading influence that has directed my forces." She was Isabel Nagle, a married woman from Boston, ten years Lachaise's senior, who was living temporarily in Paris with her child. When she returned to the U.S. in 1906, the young sculptor followed. It took more than a decade for Isabel Nagle to divorce her husband, but in 1917, Lachaise and his muse were finally married.

All of this would simply come under the heading of amusing anecdote if it weren't for the fact that Isabel Nagle, to judge by photographs and the descriptions of her contemporaries, was, although not a tall woman, in every other respect a perfect "Lachaise"—what Victorian novels called "a pocket Venus." A good deal has been written—some of it rather convincing—about the relationship between Lachaise's formal obsessions and his obsession with Isabel Nagle. It is obvious that Lachaise's sculptures are charged by his feelings about women, probably even by his feelings about a particular woman, but it diminishes the artist to assume that these powerful nudes are merely "transcriptions" of the woman he married. (Not to mention how Isabel Nagle is diminished if we assume that the only reason Lachaise was interested in her was because of her extraordinary body.) It might be more accurate to say that Mme Lachaise embodied for her husband—quite literally, it seems—a concept of idealized form that may even have haunted him before he met its living personification.

What is more interesting is to ask how that concept fits into the evolution of modernist sculpture. Clearly, all of Lachaise's work, from the most conventional to the most radical, belongs to the long, distinguished tradition of sculpture as free-standing monolith, as modeled, self-contained object that displaces space. That tradition was strong and healthy in France when Lachaise was a student; Rodin's legacy, Maillol's presence, Matisse's early forays into modeling immediately come to mind. But Lachaise's conception of form differs markedly from that of any of his distinguished predecessors. Maillol's smooth nudes are informed by a profound classicism; like the Greeks before him, Maillol seems to begin with an abstract, geometric ideal and then, with minute adjustments, turns that abstraction into vibrant human form. Neither

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Rodin nor Matisse share Maillol's sense of an underlying Platonic archetype, but both conceive the figure just as "abstractly," as a series of three-dimensional articulations that seems to anticipate the language of modernist construction; limb is set against limb, torso and head against arms and legs in a fashion that points to sculpture conceived as a combination of momentarily associated discrete parts. Perhaps because the body was such an overwhelming image for Lachaise, his point of departure is neither ideal geometry nor articulated space. His sculptures seem to begin as primal lumps, essential, inarticulate masses that the artificer-sculptor transforms into surrogates for flesh. The body itself is conceived as a substantial mass, a dense solid composed of smaller, but no less massive, forms, like a mountain range that grows out of foothills.

In sculptures such as *Elevation*, Lachaise disciplines this intensely carnal notion of form by encasing pulsing flesh in a corset of *style*. In his later figure sculptures, he allows forms to ripen and swell (causing some writers to see him as a celebrant of maturity). The danger is, of course, that the sculpture will look as though it could revert to its primordial, unshaped state. It's the reverse of what William Tucker seems to be after in his recent works, those evocative "blobs" of bronze, minimally inflected to make them suggest torsos or folded limbs or horses' heads. (In Tucker's work, unlike Lachaise's, we are immediately aware of invented form; only gradually do a variety of alternative readings, a range of images that cut across scale and ignore coherence, present themselves.) Lachaise *needs* a certain amount of crisp articulation to offset the general fleshiness of these late works, either internally, as in the way even the most voluptuous forms are played against each other, or in more explicit contrast, as in the confrontation of "hard" chair and "soft" reclining figure in *Woman in a Chair*; it keeps them from subsiding into that primordial mud.

At Salander-O'Reilly, a small study for the celebrated *Floating Figure*, inessential details eliminated, set a standard for eloquent oppositions of full-packed forms, as did a marvelous *Striding Woman* (1928-30) with its fiercely angled stance—the figure at right angles to itself—and its incisive profiles. (A fine cast of *Woman in a Chair* looked wonderful in this context and emphasized, yet again, how important sculptural opposition is to Lachaise's best works.) On the other hand, the sheer bulk of the startling, monumental *The Mountain* (1934-35) made a virtue out of risk. The implied equivalence of figure and unshaped matter, the metaphor of woman and landscape—or rather, woman turned into landscape and back again—becomes explicit in this piece. The bluntness of the forms in this vast, down-slipping, horizontal figure suggest that earth is winning, that the body is reverting as we watch to a mound of pregnant *stuff*. We think immediately of Henry Moore's massive reclining figures, but Lachaise's point seems just the opposite of Moore's. Lachaise makes us aware of how much the forms of a robust body resemble those of natural phenomena around us, while Moore, as though domesticating nineteenth-century notions of the sublime, calls our attention to how much boulders and rock-faces look like human bodies.

The Mountain is a remarkable sculpture with a remarkable history. Considered by Lachaise to be one of his most important works, the original cast-cement version was acquired by George L. K. Morris and exhibited publicly only once, in the 1935 Lachaise retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. After the exhibition, it was installed on the grounds of Morris's family estate in Massachusetts, in a site chosen by the sculptor and its new owner. The version at Salander-O'Reilly was a recent bronze cast, from a *surmoulage* of the original sculpture, made with the joint consent of the Morris and Lachaise estates, in order to preserve *The Mountain*; more than half a century of Massachusetts winters have left their mark on the concrete cast. Again, as with posthumous casts, the question of *surmoulage* is a delicate one. The power and immediacy of

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The Mountain, the clarity of its blocky forms, the metallic matteness of its patina, all suggest that this time, at least, the result was successful.

The Salander-O'Reilly show was full of works that brought you up short, some familiar, like the studies for *Floating Figure* and *Woman in a Chair*, others completely new, like the alert *Torso* (1933), cropped at the knees, beefy thighs planted wide, arms fiercely akimbo, or the amazing *Kneeling Woman, Hands on Head* (1930-35), folded like a Bamana antelope, a compressed knot of breasts, buttocks, and upflung head, perched on an anvil-like plinth. What they had in common was not only their sculptural audacity but their unabashed, flagrant sexuality. No matter how sophisticated we are, how used to looking at art, how good we are at detached aesthetic contemplation, the subject of Lachaise's work *is* very much an issue in its perception. Men and women look at these works quite differently, and casual research suggests that women's responses vary according to their perceptions of their own bodies, although that's another matter.

The imagery of Lachaise's sculptures, their undisguised subject matter, often seems more important and more immediately visible than the sculptural form given to that subject matter. I suspect this is why the fragmented figures, such as the severely cropped torsos, are almost always so much better than the figures equipped with heads, hands, and feet. Cropping renders the sculpture more abstract, making us consider even the most recognizable breasts, hips, bellies, and buttocks as masses that affect each other; complete figures—especially the agile little groups—can degenerate into anecdote. The fussy embracing pair called *Passion* (1932-34), for all their evident debt to erotic Indian prototypes, read more as a maquette for an Art Deco movie palace than as anything else, while the tightly cropped *Torso with Arms Raised* (1935), a hieratic, larger-than-life emblem composed of swollen breasts and muscular arms, poised to frame a shockingly absent head, was one of the best works in the show. The literalness of the tense, articulated fingers, extended to rhyme with equally extended nipples, simply intensifies the impact of the cropping. Startling when seen head on, the sculpture is just as compelling from the back and in profile, with powerful shoulders set above a blocky, deliberately "unfinished" section. The (at first) unequivocal femaleness of the sculpture starts eroding as you look, because of the audacious cropping and the enlarged scale, and undeniably male associations present themselves.

Lachaise's insistence on the most emotionally loaded characteristics of female anatomy, the overt sensuality of his sculptures, has frequently been discussed as a celebration of the creature he referred to in his writings as "Woman"—with a respectful capital. Barbara Rose, for example, in her essay for the catalogue of the Salander-O'Reilly show, examines Lachaise's work in relation to Indian erotic sculpture and makes a cogent case for both Lachaise and his Indian predecessors' being inspired by a similar conception of female form as a symbol of fruitfulness, energy, life itself. (There are, of course, major differences, not of content, but of form; Indian sculpture seems to be boneless, entirely about swelling exteriors, while even the most pneumatic of Lachaise's figures implies a very Western idea of a body constructed from the inside, out.)

Rose makes interesting comparisons between monumental Hindu sculptures of abstract sexual organs and Lachaise's sharply pruned female torsos. Yet in these days of heightened feminist consciousness, Lachaise's severe cropping can suggest, as well as celebration, that ultimate male transgression: the reduction of the female to a jumble of sexual parts. The paradox is that one of the most sexually explicit and most single-mindedly cropped works in the exhibition, *Abstract Female Figure*, a large-scale fragment of thighs and genitalia, was also one of the most powerful *sculptures* in the exhibition, its problematic subject matter transformed—abstracted—by simplification, cropping, and nuances of surface; no femi-

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nist floral metaphors here. *Abstract Female Figure* sharply criticized the better-known *Dynamo Mother* (1933), with its contorted pose, like a misreading of Rodin's spread-eagled *Iris*, its exaggerated nipples, and its nasty little pointed hands and feet. There's something fetishistic about *Dynamo Mother*—it looks rather like a miniature of those spiky underwater mines in World War II movies—which is not true of *Abstract Female Figure*.

The closest ancestor of *Abstract Female Figure* would seem to be Courbet's notorious *The Origin of the World* (1866), a painting commissioned as pornography and considered so improper, both in its own day and well into the twentieth century, that it was concealed by its owners, at first by a green curtain and later by a panel of an innocuous snowy landscape. The Courbet, seen in the Brooklyn Museum's informative "Courbet Revisited" a few years ago, still has the power to shock, in spite of the stuff we encounter daily on the back walls of newsstands, and it shocks in a way that Lachaise's sculpture does not. It may have something to do with the illusionism of paint and with Courbet's particular insistence on fidelity to texture; Lachaise's sculpture, while "real" by virtue of being a three-dimensional object, is nevertheless made of an "unreal" material—bronze—used in a way that emphasizes its own properties instead of mimicking, as Courbet's painting does, textures of skin and hair. Oddly, the "reality" of *Abstract Female Figure*, the fact of its being a sculptural object, further separates Lachaise's icon of femaleness from Courbet's. Both the painting and the sculpture are similarly cropped to sexual essentials, but where in *Abstract Female Figure* cropping simply asserts the sculpture's existence as an autonomous construction, independent of reference, in *The Origin of the World* the way the lush nude is framed by the edge of the canvas makes the picture more disquieting; we are acutely aware that the figure extends beyond the confines of the canvas, which returns us all the more forcibly to the painting's subject matter. It's worth noting, too, that, unlike most of Lachaise's works, *Abstract Female Figure* is not cast in the round, but is a richly inflected skin of metal; once known, this serves to distance the piece further from naturalism.

Yet, as I have said before, the subjects of Lachaise's sculptures usually register before the artist's transformation of those subjects does, and with sculptures like *Abstract Female Figure* or *Torso with Arms Raised* or *Kneeling Figure, Hands on Head* there is that momentary sense that we might not be supposed to be looking at what we are looking at, before they settle down to being compelling formal constructions. As a perceptive and otherwise articulate male friend said, confronted by *Abstract Female Figure*, "It is what it is. And that's part of why it's so good." That kind of double impact, in Lachaise's best works, is part of his power and his originality. There is certainly nothing prurient about even the most explicit of these works. Celebration, profound pleasure, just plain enthusiasm are at the core of Lachaise's sculpture. In his own day, his admirers were quick to point this out, perhaps because the kind of liberated hedonism implicit in Lachaise's work was itself a declaration of the modernism they shared. In the 1920s, e. e. cummings published a group of sonnets, sometimes lyrical, sometimes brutal, that seem to parallel the preoccupations of his sculptor friend. Images leap off the page, like comments on Lachaise's sculpture: "a fragrant sag of fruit distinctly grouped," and "the poem her belly arched through me as one army," and —most apt of all, perhaps—"god gloats upon Her stunning flesh." That "Her" could only be the person Lachaise always referred to as "Woman."

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Architecture

Stern *vs.* Kahn in Preppieland

by Carter Wiseman

Libraries just aren't what they used to be. Computers have made the dog-eared card catalogue all but obsolete; pollution is threatening the books that haven't already succumbed to the poor quality of the paper on which they were printed; and videotapes are rapidly gaining on bound biographies.

Whatever challenges such changes pose to the people who use libraries, they pose a whole host of problems to those who design them. How to accommodate all that wiring? How to anticipate the accelerating changes in information technology? How to balance the storage for books against that for bytes?

The architectural implications of such questions are nowhere more clear than in a new library at Saint Paul's School, in Concord, New Hampshire. Saint Paul's is one of the leading members of the New England cadre that has for generations provided Yale, Harvard, and Princeton, among other top colleges, with some of their best (and wealthiest) students. When the need for a new Saint Paul's library emerged, the school hired Robert A. M. Stern, a founding member and durable defender of architectural postmodernism, the movement that, with famously mixed results, has tried to bring an appreciation of history back into design.

Historian though he is, Stern has provided the Ohrstrom Library—as the building is officially known—with every imaginable technological amenity, from computer hook-ups in the study carrels to a state-of-the-art conservation department, and power-assisted shelving for rare books. All this is embellished with the sort of squishy leather furniture, wood paneling, and tooled-metal light fixtures that most educational institutions haven't been able to afford since before the Great Depression. The custom-made lampshades even sport an "SPS" monogram.

But for all its technological capacity and high-priced appointments, Ohrstrom falls surprisingly short of its architectural potential. Sprouting historical references that span the spectrum from Edwin Lutyens to H. H. Richardson and beyond, it is described by the architect's office brochure as "counterpointing in a dialogue across time and space" with the surrounding buildings. But it embraces "contextualism" with such force that art is left gasping.

What's missing would not be so evident if Ohrstrom's completion last year had not coincided with the twentieth anniversary of a library at a sister institution, the Phillips Exeter Academy, just a few miles away in Exeter, New Hampshire.

The Exeter library was designed by Louis I. Kahn, an architect who, since his death in 1974, has assumed a semi-divine status in the profession and has come forcefully before the public through an exhibition that opened last fall at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (It is now traveling to Paris, New York, Japan, Los Angeles, Fort Worth, and Columbus, Ohio.)

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That show makes powerfully clear what Kahn stood for: a love of elemental forms modulated by exquisite details; a unique sense of materials and how they are joined together; a confident way with grand spaces; and a sublime sensitivity to light (a quality most evident in his Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth and his Center for British Art in New Haven).

Picking Kahn to do its library was a risky choice for Exeter, which had long been content with an unexceptional hodge-podge of shabby-genteel Georgian school buildings. And when he embarked on it, computers, videotapes, and the like were still far in the future. That has proved to be a problem for the school: Retrofitting a building that rejoices in its masonry has been a nightmare for librarians and contractors alike.

But the architecture has transcended all that. The building is, basically, a five-story box within a box. The outermost box is made of brick, a concession to the most common material on the campus, but its four-square mass and unblinking, deep-set windows give it a brooding, uncompromising presence. At the center is a sky-lit void, each of its walls cut away in a vast circle of concrete. Surrounding the central space are the stacks; at the perimeter are carrels and lounge areas. No zone is sealed from the other, so that, as Kahn put it in his runic way, the students would be able to "take the book and go to the light."

The beauty of the concept is that it is at once geometrically tough and thoroughly humane. The balconies around the central space present a constantly changing scene of students moving among the shelves, while the space itself commands a sense of awe at its abstraction. Here Kahn made a masterly combination of the timeless and the daily. The current librarian says the building works as well as it does because the architect spent so much time before he designed it immersing himself in what libraries are supposed to do. There is no need for "Silence" signs; the architecture itself disciplines as it invites.

In contrast to Kahn, Stern has made a career of skillfully adapting the architecture of the nineteenth-century rich to the ambitions of more recent fortunes. But, having embraced an admirable idea—that of rehabilitating the architectural traditions so long spurned by modernists—he has settled for "product."

Set next to a picturesque pond at a critical point on the Saint Paul's campus, Stern's library might easily have made an architectural statement no less powerful than Kahn's. Instead, it plays absolutely safe. Laid out rather like a church, with the stacks in the nave, the building rises a modest two stories. It is clad in a warm red brick that is interrupted by decorous stripes of yellowish sandstone. At one end is a large gabled roof joined to an entertaining but excessive chimney. At the other end is a turret topped by an ole-timey weather vane, and, in between, the roof is punctuated by those eyebrow windows one associates with vanished country houses. The huge bay window overlooking the water would do Charles Rennie Mackintosh proud. Historians may wink at the references, but partisans of architecture should be dismayed by Stern's cloying timidity.

Not that Ohrstrom is without redeeming qualities. There is a book-lined octagonal reading room that couldn't be cozier. The main staircase has a magisterial sweep that almost demands formal dress. And the oak card catalogue is little short of sculpture, even if it will soon be functionally antique. Ohrstrom is, in almost every way, a comfortable building.

But while the earlier architects of the Saint Paul's campus—Henry Vaughan, Ernest Flagg, and James Gamble Rogers—attached no less importance to comfort, they were also excellent space-makers. For the most part, their stylistic overlay (for which they were roundly attacked by the early modernists) was in fact only incidental to their skillful organization and sensitive detailing.

Stern has used their precedents to boost his own work as neighborly, but there is a difference. When the stylistic identity is stripped from Vaughan's chapel, a memorable space remains. In the Ohrstrom Li-

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brary, there is no such space. The main reading room, which aspires to grandeur, is ennobled less by its proportions than by the knockout view of the adjacent pond.

Overall, the building conveys a sense that Stern was so overwhelmed by the social implications of the commission that he was unable to engage the artistic opportunity. He has often been criticized for being the Ralph Lauren of contemporary architecture. But that implies providing the appearance of old money to insecure folk who have plenty of new. Ohrstrom presents the curious spectacle of an architect who specializes in retrograde fantasies designing for an institution that is a pillar of the society on which those fantasies are based. This is a headlong retreat into the ambiance—but definitely not the substance—of a bygone era.

Stern is well equipped to operate in such artificial precincts. Like many of today's better-known architectural names—Frank Gehry, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey—he has joined the Disney marching band, designing archly knowing facilities for Michael Eisner's expanding empire of amusement parks. Although less overt, the intent at Saint Paul's is similar: to delight the underage with caricatures of the real thing.

Compounding the irony is the willingness of Saint Paul's to invest so much treasure, however unsuspectingly, in what can be seen as a subtle mockery of its best self. Should one not hope that such well-informed institutions—for all their fiscal conservatism—try to advance the artistic ball? What one is left with at Saint Paul's is a virtuoso display of art-historical erudition that—for all its fiscal excess—masks an instantly dated and finally unexceptional building.

The Ohrstrom is such a well-crafted work of make-believe that most people could be forgiven for thinking it authentic—if there were not a genuine work of art just up the road. The Exeter library, behind the technological curve as it may be, is a timeless building, and a reminder that while fashions change, aping old favorites is no substitute for aesthetic risks that succeed.

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Theater

A palpable miss

by Donald Lyons

Two actors, one from a philistine American frontier and the other from a more settled tradition, duel obliquely while, in a manner, performing the same Shakespearean tragic role in New York. Last season's farcical *I Hate Hamlet*, where John Barrymore's ghost accosted a Hollywood actor about to play Hamlet? No, the recent melodrama by Richard Nelson, *Two Shakespearean Actors*, at the Cort Theatre. During the week between May 3 and 10, 1849, the English tragedian William Charles Macready was performing *Macbeth* at the Astor Place Opera House in downtown New York City, while the American tragedian Edwin Forrest, the nation's first theatrical idol, was at the Broadway Theatre in repertory with both *Macbeth* and a melodrama called *Metamora*, a sort of pastiche of Fenimore Cooper, largely concocted by Forrest himself, that featured eloquently perishing noble Indian savages. Unruly theatergoers, apparently upset at Macready's daring to challenge their local darling with a foreign *Macbeth*, took to disrupting performances at the Astor Place and finally, on May 10, broke into riot. Thirty-four people died. Hundreds more were injured. Macready fled town.

These lurid events are literally noises off in Mr. Nelson's play, which prefers instead to frequent actors' haunts such as taverns, hotel dining rooms, and love nests. One keeps waiting for Mr. Nelson to emerge with a theme, to come to grips with the sensational-*cum*-tragic events just offstage. But he obstinately refuses, confining himself instead to variations of old jokes about actors. Actors, we were unsurprised to learn: drink a lot after performance (Macready *passim*); womanize mindlessly (Forrest *passim*); will do anything for a laugh; are an international fraternity; are vain about aging; are given to silly, self-aggrandizing jargon ("Oh Mr. Macready, I don't think my character would ever do that," protests, perhaps a bit anachronistically, one player); care above all else about the size of the role (everyone *passim*); can simulate humility ("I was not very good tonight," says Forrest, only to renege when taken seriously); and relish being uncharitable toward other performers ("I enjoy watching other actors even when they're bad, even when they're silly. . . . I enjoyed your Hamlet a great deal . . . that dance you did," purrs Forrest. When Forrest boasts of having visited asylums in preparation for playing Hamlet, Macready replies, "You study asylums and I study the play").

These almost generic sallies, which Mr. Nelson rarely endows with epigrammatic elegance or economy, are supplemented by a few wan reflections upon the differences between English and American styles of playing. Americans are "instinctive" and "like children," but, it is left to be gathered, unable to speak the speech.

When, for once, an actor attempts a large statement about his art, it amounts to this: "Life is not half as much fun as theatre." For-

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rest, the speaker of these lines, expands a bit later on his dismal motto: "You step in horse shit on the street. Wives don't listen when you talk to them. You lose your favorite pen. . . . And then you play Hamlet. Then you become someone else. (*Beat.*) To do this you must learn to forget." Like much else in *Two Shakespearean Actors*, this has the air of something better said elsewhere. Mr. Nelson is relentlessly superficial. The forgetfulness Forrest is describing (and there is no sign Mr. Nelson disagrees) is not that spiritual emptying or *kenosis* out of which, I think, really great acting comes, but that familiar egotistical vanity. Forrest throughout airily disclaims any connection to his violent and ultimately homicidal claque; he suggests, indeed, that Macready was a coward for not facing them down. "How was *your* play tonight?" asks the fleeing Macready. "Fine," answers the American star. "There was no riot. A large section of my audience did not try to murder me. The theatre is not burning. Not a bad night." And Forrest's (and the play's) final words stress his distance, his alienation from the mayhem committed in his name.

If Mr. Nelson intended to illustrate in art, to (in a word) dramatize, the tragic and pathological indifference of artists to life, it has to be said that he shows neither the shaping intelligence nor the enlivening command of language to do it. Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *Kean*, based on the life of the bravura actor, attacked with lush rhetorical zest such romantico-existential concepts as the anger, lack of identity, and radical insincerity of actors. But here Forrest's idiotic blitheness in the face of all that blood is not so much analyzed as imitated in the script's compulsive lurching for cheap laughs.

The closer Mr. Nelson gets to a real stage, the better he is—for instance when the stage, split in half, shows the two *Macbeths* in rehearsal, Macready's playing to stage right and Forrest's to stage left. Although the contrast between two modes of presentation—British bombast, say, *versus* Yankee bluster—could be clearer, the thing is nimbly staged by Jack O'Brien, artistic director of the Globe Theatre in San Diego, as are the *Metamora* scenes (although their satirical thrust, too, could have used more pointing and heightening).

In the play's final scene, the two stars trade shoptalk while ignoring the storms without. They are in Forrest's empty theater. Forrest then tries some lines of Othello's, as much for sound as for sense; Macready counters with some of Lear's. Mr. Nelson seems to be hoping, along with Forrest and Macready, that some Shakespearean psychological depth will rub off on the two speakers. And some critics have, astonishingly, said that Mr. Nelson's writing, here and elsewhere in the play, flows seamlessly into, and need not blush before, Shakespeare. For my part, I think Mr. Nelson would have done better to go ahead and write *Othello*, word for word, like the scribe in Borges who writes *Don Quixote.*

The central performances were just short of strong enough. Macready is a role that, adequately written, would have fitted Ralph Richardson like a glove. The gifted veteran Brian Bedford here hit the note of a fuzzily alcoholic and laconic sarcasm a bit too unvaryingly; his laugh pauses and rhythms became predictable. The byronically profiled Victor Garber got Forrest's vanity well enough, but kept going for a sympatheticness; he should have forsaken naturalism altogether and played a farcical monstrousness, a Jonsonian brittleness. But the script, to be fair, did not let him. Popping up to little purpose was Irish dramatist Dion Boucicault, played passably by Graham Winston. He mainly occasioned lame jokes about the Irish.

In a way the undigested offstage massacre of *Two Shakespearean Actors* is the contemporary equivalent of the suicide in George Kaufman and Edna Ferber's *Stage Door.* Back then, shamefacedly lightweight comedies about show business were gussied up in psychological duds. Now the labels read "colonialism," "xenophobia," "philistinism," "mass hysteria." It is still, however, spinach.

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Books

The human sources of history

by Donald Kagan

Arnaldo Momigliano, who died in 1987, was the world's leading student of the writing of history in the ancient world. He examined the historiography not only of the Greeks and Romans but also of the Hebrews, Persians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, among others, and the breadth of his curiosity and learning was unmatched. Born and educated in Italy, he was appointed to the chair of Roman history at the University of Turin at the age of twenty-eight, but as a Jew he was removed from the position by Mussolini's racial laws. Most of his subsequent work was done in England, first at Oxford and then at University College, London, where he held the professorship of ancient history from 1951 to 1975. From then until his death he was a regular visiting professor at the University of Chicago. He wrote several books: biographies of Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, and of the Roman Emperor Claudius, and works on *The Development of Greek Biography*, on *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*, and on *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the First Century*. Each is written with grace and is full of learning, careful scholarship, and wisdom, but each is a slim volume that tends to read more like a collection of separate essays about a common subject than like a fully integrated account that sets a problem and proposes a solution. In fact, Momigliano's favorite form was the learned essay, and he fortunately left us eleven volumes of them in his *Contributi alla Storia degli Studi Classici e del Mondo Antico*.

The title of his last, posthumous, volume, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, could raise the reader's hopes for a final summation of a great life's work.[1] But such was not Momigliano's genre. Like several of his earlier books, this is the publication of a series of lectures, namely the Sather Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley. They were given in 1962, revised over the next fifteen years, but even then withheld for an annotation that was never completed. The publication is without notes from the text as the author left it. Revision of so brief a book cannot have taken very long nor should the search for notes have been arduous. Why should Momigliano have delayed publication for almost three decades and until his death? Was he dissatisfied? Did he hope to return to the full treatment of the subject for which this volume seems a bare sketch?

We shall probably never know, but there is much to appreciate in what we have. There are essays on the influence of Persian historiography on that of the Greeks and the Hebrews, on the historical tradition of Herodotus and Thucydides, on the rise of antiquarian research, on the Roman historian

1 *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, by Arnaldo Momigliano, with a foreword by Riccardo Di Donato; University of California Press, 162 pages, $29.95.

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Fabius Pictor as the founder of national history, on Tacitus and the tradition he established, and on the origins of ecclesiastical history. The first essay compares Persian historiography, chiefly known to us from inscriptions, with the character of the history we find in the Old Testament and in the Greek historians. Both Jews and Greeks had contact and were familiar with the Persians and their society, but their historiography represents a reaction against its tradition of royal chronicles:

> Both the Jewish and the Greek type of political history broke with the Persian or more generally Oriental type of history centred on the performances of individual kings or heroes: it expressed the life of societies deliberating and acting with clear purposes under the leadership of far-seeing men.

Both reacted against the ecumenical, multinational imperial outlook of the Persians and turned inward to focus on their own peculiar traditions, but in other respects the Greek and Jewish historiographical approaches were very different.

The Hebrew Bible tells a single continuous story from the beginning of the world. Although its writers were concerned with the truth, it was God's Truth; each generation has the responsibility of preserving "a truthful record of the events in which God showed his presence," and passing it on to the next was a religious duty. For the Jews reliability depended on the truthfulness of the transmitters and on the ultimate truth of God. There came to be only one tradition; the biblical historians took no note of different versions of the same event. Yet that single account was sacred and vital for the Hebrews. "To the biblical Hebrew, history and religion were one." Once the canon of biblical history was set, moreover, the Jews largely lost interest in the study of history. They focused their attention on the Torah, the eternal law. "History had nothing to explain and little to reveal to the man who meditated the law day and night."

History among the Greeks was very different. For them, the sources of history were human, not divine, and they were many and varied. To discover historical truth it was necessary to compare them and decide among them by means of painstaking research (*historia*) and unaided human reason. Historians wrote of limited, although sometimes grand, topics, treated in such a way as to illuminate the causes and consequences of events. History was meant to explain, "to provide an example, constitute a warning, point to likely developments in human affairs."

Momigliano makes it clear that the Greek tradition is the inspiring source of modern historical writing. At its heart is the critical attitude that distinguished "between facts and fancies." This is the most important contribution, and "no historiography earlier than the Greek or independent of it developed critical methods, and we have inherited the Greek methods." For Momigliano, as for most historians, this was the essential and necessary starting point for anything properly called the writing of history. In our own day we see the very distinction between "facts and fancies" undermined by literary critics and even professional historians. This kind of skepticism, of course, is nothing new. As part of the political and religious controversies of the seventeenth century skeptical critics called Pyrrhonists declared all historical writings to be mere partisan tracts. Like their modern descendants, they thereby freed themselves to treat the past in any way they liked, or to ignore it altogether. Momigliano saw the Pyrrhonist movement as having "an adverse effect" on historical studies. For all his extraordinary breadth and tolerance for new approaches, he would also have judged the modern Pyrrhonists as terribly retrogressive.

Momigliano attributes the invention of Greek, and therefore of modern, historiography to the sixth century B.C. and emphasizes two developments. At some point between Hesiod (*c.* 700 B.C.) and Hecataeus of Miletus (*c.* 500 B.C.) "a revolution happened." The political part of that revolu-

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tion was the discovery of law and its importance in distinguishing between different societies. Unlike the Hebrew law, which was "beyond history," Greek law, in spite of early claims for its divine origin, emerged from human history.

> It is no chance that historiography developed in the fifth century in the full maturity of Ionian and Attic democracy. The victory of democracy was the victory for social mobility and reform: it was the victory for free and rational choice. It sharpened the interest in political theories and constitutional changes, it invited comparison between Greek and non-Greek institutions and between the various types of Greek institutions.

The second part of the revolution was philosophical, arising from contact with other peoples and an intensive questioning of received traditions and opinions. This did not, however, lead to empty relativism or to skepticism, but to a "search for new principles of explanation, the rise of doubt as an intellectual stimulus to new discoveries." Hecataeus, therefore, began his *Genealogies* with a challenge to tradition: "I Hecataeus will say what I think to be the truth; the stories of the Greeks are many and ridiculous." That did not lead him either to make up whatever story he liked or to despair of finding the truth. It led him to questioning and research and the reasoned quest for accurate knowledge and understanding—that is, toward history.

It is not Hecataeus, however, whom we call the father of history but Herodotus, and Momigliano explains why. Hecataeus appears to have confined himself to the comparison and reasoned criticism of what was thought to be known. In his effort to preserve valuable memories of great deeds of the past, Herodotus undertook inquiries, even traveling to foreign countries to gather new evidence. "The task of preserving traditions implied the aim of discovering new facts. Both together entailed a new methodical approach in which the reliability of evidence mattered more than rational evaluation of probabilities." For all that, Herodotus did not enjoy a reputation for accuracy, truthfulness, and objectivity among ancient writers. They pointed to factual inaccuracies, many called him a liar outright, and Plutarch wrote an essay on his "malignity," charging him with a lack of patriotism and a prejudice in favor of Athens.

The "Father of History," in fact, with his meandering style full of discursive side trips into the customs and habits of various peoples, his serious consideration of the causal role of the gods in human affairs, did not become the model for what was thought to be the best historical writing in the ancient world. Polybius and the Romans Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, and Ammianus Marcellinus were the great historical writers of antiquity, and they wrote chiefly about their own times, their own nations, and, especially, about war and politics.[2] As a model Herodotus was eclipsed. The responsibility for this Momigliano places squarely on the shoulders of Thucydides, who "put himself between Herodotus and his readers." Without directly naming the historian of the Persian Wars, Thucydides corrected some of his factual errors, dismissing him as one who wrote "a prize-essay to be heard for the moment," compared to his own more serious effort, which was meant to be a "possession for all time." Where Herodotus delved deeply into the distant past, painted on a broad canvas the picture of many nations and peoples, and was interested in their religious, social, and cultural practices, Thucydides focused his powerful critical eye on the present and on the recent past; he fixed his gaze intently on the Greeks, and especially on his own Athenians; finally he concentrated the reader's attention on the war, its diplomacy and its politics. For him,

2 Livy was exceptional in writing of a more distant past. Polybius, since his subject was the rise of the Roman Empire, wrote much about the Romans, and, necessarily, a bit about their enemies. His main subjects, however, were the Romans and the Greeks.

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as Lord Acton put it, "History is past politics."

Polybius, whose history of Rome's conquest of the Mediterranean world followed the Thucydidean model, and Tacitus, who focused on politics in Rome, were much esteemed during the Renaissance and the early modern period of European history. The writers of the eighteenth century, with their interest in the manners and civilization of earlier periods and of the entire world, rediscovered Herodotus, although as philosophical historians themselves they also admired Thucydides' search for a useful history that sought the causes of events in the lasting elements in human nature and the human condition. The nineteenth century, however, especially in Germany, saw the triumph of political history and the eclipse of Herodotus by Thucydides.

Momigliano, with his broad and generous understanding of historiography, his sense that it must combine the story of politics, diplomacy, and war with that of society, culture, and civilization, deplored that development and approved the change that had come along in his own time. Writing in the early 1960s he said with satisfaction that "the need for a comprehensive, extrapolitical history is admitted by almost everyone," and, in the same spirit, that "we must not concede to Thucydides that he really replaced Herodotus." Thirty years later the world of historical writing has changed so much as to make these remarks seem dated. In much of the American academy "extrapolitical history" has all but pushed political history out the door. The most famous and influential of the social historians, Fernand Braudel, dismissed the elements of politics, diplomacy, and war as mere *événements*, transient and trivial in comparison with the greater and longer-lasting issues posed by geography, demography, and social and economic developments over long periods of time. In his best known work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, the political decisions, events, and developments are of small moment compared to the inanimate and impersonal forces that shape societies over the very long run.

Now it is clear enough that such forces exist and that they have considerable impact on politics, war, and diplomacy, chiefly in establishing the limits of what is possible. Within those limits, however, individuals and groups of human beings make decisions that are of vital importance, and those decisions that are military, diplomatic, and political, moreover, influence ever larger groups of people in ways that can affect the very existence of peoples, nations, and the human race. It is important that we understand the underlying conditions and forces, geographic, demographic, anthropological, psychological, etc., that help to frame and influence the choices that people make in these decisive realms. But if it is to be helpful, this knowledge must be connected with the specific facts, decisions, and events made in the public arena, that is, in the world of politics. "Extrapolitical" historians have not made those connections, preferring to leave unasked the great political questions that have always been the spark that ignited interest in history altogether.

It is important to remember that Herodotus, for all his wanderings into geographical, sociological, and anthropological descriptions and analyses, tried to connect them, however remotely, with his major purposes as set forth at the beginning of his history of the Persian Wars:

> This is the result of the inquiry (*historia*) of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, published so that time may not erase the memory of past events from the mind of mankind, so that the great and marvelous deeds of the Greeks and the barbarians should not be without fame, and especially to explain why they fought against one another.

It was those "great and marvelous deeds" and the attempt to explain why they came about that justified the whole effort, including the broader inquiries into earlier times

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and distant peoples. That is the historiographical legacy left both by Herodotus and Thucydides and by their successors in the ancient world of Greece and Rome. I believe that Momigliano would have argued that it should guide all good historical writing. It is our great loss that he is not here to apply his wisdom and learning to the question.

Apologies to Sidney

Katherine Duncan-Jones
Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet.
Yale University Press,
350 pages, $29.95

reviewed by James Bowman

What is it that makes a great man? It is easy enough to tell in the case of Napoleon or Newton or Shakespeare, whose lives made the world an irrevocably different place from what it had been before. But in every age there are people who seem great to their contemporaries not so much for making anything different (although they may do that too) but, as it were, for being the same, for summing up in their own lives what the age sees itself as being about. Sports heroes, explorers and adventurers, film stars and popular heroes like Charles Lindbergh and Neil Armstrong fall into this category. They may or may not retain their greatness in the eyes of subsequent generations.

Such a man, too, is Sir Philip Sidney. Although he produced in his short lifetime (1554-1586) two or three works of literature that are still read, it is his reputation as the ideal Elizabethan gentleman which has done most to keep his memory green for four centuries. He is still a figure of some interest today, even though few people anymore have a very clear idea of what it is they are admiring when they admire him. This is apparently true even of his biographers. From the latest Sidney biography, by Katherine Duncan-Jones, you will learn all that you care to know about the details of his life but very little indeed about what it was that made Sidney great. If he was great. If there is any such thing as greatness.

Miss Duncan-Jones, a fellow of Somerville College, Oxford, is in an important sense unequal to her subject. She knows that Sidney wrote some impressive poetry, a romance, the *Arcadia*, in which, as Virginia Woolf said, "all the seeds of English fiction lie latent," and a rumbustious *Apology for Poetry* (which she insists on calling his *Defence of Poesy*, an alternative title but one which is too easily confused with Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*). She knows, too, that Sidney was well-connected in Elizabethan court circles and much admired by his contemporaries, but she cannot convey to us why it is that he still matters enough to be the subject of a new biography.

What she can convey is that Sidney was not nearly so politically incorrect as you might expect from one of those "fools in old-style hats and coats" (in Philip Larkin's phrase) that lived back in the days of patriarchy and bear-baiting and other crimes against the spirit of equality. Sidney, it seems, didn't care for hunting and bear-baiting and, if not actually homosexual himself (the evidence is ambiguous), he at least had close friends who pretty clearly *were* homosexual and to whom he expressed undying affection. Above all, he had relatively enlightened views about women. "It would be going too far to suggest," writes Miss Duncan-Jones,

> that the 'Old' *Arcadia* offered a deliberate challenge to the concept of a patriarchal society. But like many Elizabethan writers, Sidney showed the disasters that ensue in such a society when the figure wielding most authority, the 'father of the people', fails to correct his personal limitations by taking good advice.

Talk about damning with faint praise! Sidney may not have been great, but at least he was PC.

Here is our modern academic contribution to history: the great men of the past are to be judged according to the scale of ra-

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cism, sexism, homophobia, and the like. If they pass the test, as Sidney seems to do in Miss Duncan-Jones's reckoning, they are allowed to retain their claims to greatness. Perhaps, even, this is what greatness *is*—to stand up for equal rights, or to be able to be *read* as standing up for equal rights, at a time and under circumstances where the need for them hardly occurred to anyone else. In other words, the more like Katherine Duncan-Jones and other modern-day clerks of Oxford Sir Philip manages to appear, the greater we are to allow him to be.

Well, as Sidney himself said at the beginning of the *Apology*, "self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves are parties." But what is this to do with history or biography, whose end must be the understanding of the past? Are we really learning anything by sifting through the life stories of our imposing ancestors for the sole purpose of turning up tiny nuggets of similarity to ourselves? Miss Duncan-Jones's bloodless biography leaves us with the impression that Sidney's claim upon our attention amounts to the fact that he was at least no worse than his contemporaries when it comes to the things that really matter and that perhaps he was rather better—in some degree adumbrating our own enlightened times in his appreciation for women and homosexuals. Oh, yes: and he also wrote some lovely poetry.

There is something here of what Wyndham Lewis called "The Demon of Progress in the Arts"—the belief that the art of the past cannot be judged by absolute standards but only according to its progressive qualities—which is to say only to the extent that it can be seen as resembling our own. It is true that Miss Duncan-Jones is appreciative of Sidney's oeuvre in an abstract way. But most of what she has to say about it, when she is not complimenting his progressive social attitudes, is as a gloss upon his life, often in merely speculative form. Thus:

> For all we know, Mary Herbert may have recognized traits of her brother both in the languid love-melancholy of Philisides and the explosive sexual passion of Pyrocles. On the other hand, in locating such passion within characters who have manifest connexions with himself, Sidney may simply have used fictionally transformed self-images for literary purposes.

So indeed he may. But why should we care? And why should we care any more about the literature than we do about the man?

The answer is not really far to seek, though it is not one which registers with our biographer—or indeed with anyone taking the progressive view of literary history. Fulke Greville, Sidney's boyhood friend and first biographer (and, opines Miss Duncan-Jones, a homosexual), wrote of him: "His talk was ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind."

> His end was not writing, even while he wrote; nor his knowledge moulded for tables, or schools; but both his wit, and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinion, but in life and action, good and great. In which Architectonical art he was such a Master, with so commanding, and yet equall waies amongst men, that whersoever he went, he was beloved and obeyed.

Here, in Greville's appreciation, is the key to unlock the secret of Sidney's charisma. Yet Miss Duncan-Jones doesn't see it—probably because it is so utterly foreign to the critical assumptions of our own time. For us, literature is its own end in the way that Kant prescribed people should be. But this principle of artistic autonomy is foreign to the Elizabethan sensibility. It marks a wide gulf between us and the neo-classical frame of mind. To his contemporaries, Sidney was so much admired precisely because he was thought to have established a bridge between art and real life.

That, at any rate, was the point of the *Apology for Poetry*, which insisted on the moral purpose of poetry as an element of the

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master art or *architectonike*. This, says Sidney, consists "in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only." The beauty of art was to inspire virtue, and Sidney's life seemed to his contemporaries a testimony to its capacity to do precisely that. Yet there is nothing in Miss Duncan-Jones's book to persuade us that Sidney even *was* particularly virtuous, except insofar as he was not guilty of speech or behavior offensive to women and minorities. The terrible suspicion arises: does Miss Duncan-Jones even have an idea of what it would be to be virtuous in any other sense?

Certainly she has little idea of what it is to be honorable. Writing of Sidney's attempt to defend his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, against an anonymous pamphlet by issuing a challenge against its author, she sniffs: "Did he believe that such a duel would be of the slightest use in clearing his uncle's name? . . . A sword fight by Sidney in Paris or Rouen was hardly likely to undo the harm done in the minds of those who read the pamphlet on either side of the Channel." She can only conclude that her subject had an insecure grasp on reality and that this was one of his "psychotic-like attacks of rage" caused by "repressive Tudor methods of child-rearing."

It would take too long to explain here that honor has nothing to do with "rage," that the relevant reality here is a social one having to do with hierarchy and patriarchy and other things that she does not understand, and that, in an age when it was still thought that there must be some connection between word and deed, a "sword-fight," or the offer of one, might indeed be a very sufficient answer to scurrilous libel. The point is that Miss Duncan-Jones, trapped inside a narrow, academic circle inscribed in a neglected corner of the late twentieth century, is unable to think like an Elizabethan and therefore to imagine why Sir Philip Sidney was a great or even a very interesting man. What, then, is the use of her book about him?

Our woman in Europe

Margaret Fuller
"These Sad But Glorious Days": Dispatches from Europe, 1846-1850.
Edited by Larry J. Reynolds & Susan Belasco Smith.
Yale University Press, 338 pages, $35

reviewed by Thomas Mallon

To those readers for whom Margaret Fuller is only a footnote to the Brook Farm episode of the Transcendental movement, this collection of thirty-seven dispatches written for Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune* presents an opportunity to view her as a developing personality, burning off heaps of silliness and taking on something like character—even splendor—as she finds herself caught up in the brief, calamitous life of the Roman Republic during the European uprisings of the late 1840s.

Sensing the possibilities of what a later age would call New Journalism ("If you could mix in them personal life still more," she advised her predecessor at the *Tribune* at his dispatches, "it would improve them"), Fuller spent much of late 1846 and early 1847 reporting from England and France —and quite without the distinction the editors of this volume attribute to her dispatches as a whole ("Their engaging contents, their vital, organic form, their supple, powerful prose . . ."). In fact, the British reports are oddly paced and suffer from a nails-on-the-blackboard tendency to follow up any clear observation of particulars with self-cherishing truisms. The sight of a sharp seventy-six-year-old Scotswoman makes Fuller tell readers back in New York that the old lady proves "the truth of my theory that we need never grow old." Locating herself among those "who take an interest in the cause of human freedom," Fuller can be counted on to become compulsively rhetorical about anything she's glimpsed. "All but the very poor in England put out their washing," she notes in Dispatch 10, "and this custom ought to be universal in civilized

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countries, as it can be done much better and quicker by a few regular laundresses than by many families, and 'the washing day' is so malignant a foe to the peace and joy of households that it ought to be effaced from the calendar." She can be as unintentionally funny as Simone de Beauvoir would be, traveling in America a century later: when Fuller declares the "*Precieuses Ridicules*" to be "a race which is never quite extinct," she has at last said a mouthful.

Much gush results from her encounters with literature ("Since Adam, there has been none that approached nearer fitness to stand up before God and angels in the naked majesty of manhood than Robert Burns") and with art ("Who can despair when he thinks of a form like that, so full of life and bliss!"). One example of truly practical criticism, however—her account of how, after she had a tooth extracted, attending a Parisian performance of *Don Giovanni* soothed her raw nerves—does foreshadow the distinctive quality of the Italian dispatches: their author's ability to put personal trouble to journalistic use. The distress arising out of unexpected poverty (from financial mix-ups with Greeley) and pregnancy (by Giovanni Ossoli, a Civic Guard captain) vitalizes the heretofore literary character of her emotional responses with real feeling, and lets her describe political catastrophe with an authentically broken heart.

Before arriving in Rome, Fuller's politics consisted of a tentative subscription to Fourierism, which she imagined to be making "considerable progress" wherever "they spread the necessity of some practical application of the precepts of Christ." She had met Mazzini in London and been predictably bowled over ("not only one of the heroic, the courageous, and the faithful —Italy boasts many such—but . . . also one of the wise"), but nothing really prepared her for the Italian challenge to Austrian rule that she was to witness between late 1847 and the summer of 1849. Eager to convert Americans to the cause of Italian freedom and unification, Fuller fleshes out her dispatches with manifestos and poems, and the second half of this volume reads as a surprisingly coherent history of the Italian revolution, from the first hints of papal support to the ultimate defeat of Mazzini.

Fuller's changing reactions to Pius IX show the whole dispiriting downward trajectory. She moves from near adoration ("He has shown undoubted wisdom, clearsightedness, bravery and firmness, but it is above all, his generous heart that gives him his power over this people") into apprehension, disappointment (the pontiff is "fettered by the prejudices of education"), and, finally, after both he and the French have betrayed the Italian cause, contempt ("It seems he cannot rest, or his wicked counsellors cannot rest, till he has recanted every good thing he ever did"). The Italians themselves, whatever Fuller may say in her private correspondence, are lauded to *Tribune* readers for their humanity and courage: "Wonderfully has this people been developed within a year!" she writes in the spring of 1848. Despite hardship, she feels no desire to come home, insisting that the spirit of liberty is more alive in Italy than in an America besotted by prosperity, slavery, and the conquest of Mexico.

According to her new editors, Larry J. Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith, she expresses a "proprietary attitude" toward her Italian experience. (Their long introduction, like Fuller's book, gets better as it goes along.) Announcing her intention to write a history of "this great drama," Fuller declares that "The materials are over-rich. I have bought my right in them by much sympathetic suffering . . ." The morning after the Republic is proclaimed, she proceeds to the Capitol, where she meets an American:

> He "had no confidence in the Republic." Why? Because he "had no confidence in the People." Why? Because "they were not like *our* People." Ah! Jonathan and John—excuse me, but I must say the Italian has a decided advantage over you in the power of quickly feeling generous sympathy, as well as some other things which I have not time now to par-

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> ticularize. *Mais nous nous reverrons.* I have memoranda from you both in my note-book.

She declares a desire to serve as the American ambassador in Rome, even though "woman's day has not come yet." That particular bit of feminist history would not be made until Dwight Eisenhower gave the Italian embassy to Clare Boothe Luce, but in 1849 Bishop John Joseph Hughes did complain that "no ambassador from foreign countries has recognised [a Roman] republic, except it be the female plenipotentiary who furnishes the *Tribune* with diplomatic correspondence."

Fuller's best descriptive writing covers the French bombardment of Rome, which proved fatal to the Republic in the summer of 1849:

> When the bombs began to come, one of the Trasteverines, those noble images of the old Roman race, redeemed her claim to that descent by seizing one and extinguishing the match. She received a medal and a reward in money. A soldier did the same at Palazzo Spada, where is the statue of Pompey, at whose base great Caesar fell. He was promoted. Immediately the people were seized with emulation; armed with pans of wet clay they ran wherever the bombs fell, to extinguish them. Women collect the balls from the hostile cannon and carry them to ours.

Fuller finds the strength to tend to young men in the hospitals ("One kissed an arm which was cut off") and, after describing how the café-loving Italians must hurry home at the hour of the French-imposed curfew, goes on to say what she never could have in her verbose English dispatches: "Comment is unnecessary."

Tragedy becomes her, and she records the sights of the brutalized city with a fine, genuine anger, mocking one uninformed foreign journal for implying that the red flags flying from Roman rooftops indicate bloodlust: "these flags are put up at the entrance of those streets where there is no barricade, as a signal to coachmen and horsemen that they can pass freely. There is one on the house where I am, in which is no person but myself who thirst for peace, and the *padrone* who thirsts for money."

Her last dispatch, from Florence on January 6, 1850, is a whirlwind of anger and prophecy: "Do you laugh, Roman Cardinal, as you shut the prison-door on a woman weeping for her son martyred in the cause of his country? Do you laugh, Austrian officer, as you drill the Hungarian and Lombard youth to tremble at your baton? Soon you, all of you, shall '*believe* and tremble.'"

One feels certain that prolonged bitterness over the defeat would have spoiled her hard-won splendor back into silliness, just as one knows that, had she been born seventy or so years later, Saint Petersburg would have been the second Troy she wished to see burn. By the end of her Roman witness, Fuller's radicalization was complete enough for her to have acquired "twentieth-century" habits of selective reporting: Reynolds and Smith point out that she "surely knew, but chose not to say" that during the French siege of Rome some republicans had taken to murdering priests.

Fuller's proposed "History of the Late Revolutionary Movements in Italy" was rejected, despite some improbable help from Carlyle, by a London publisher. The manuscript perished in June 1850, when Fuller, Ossoli, and their son, returning to America on the *Elizabeth*, were shipwrecked and drowned.

Shorter notices

Marguerite Yourcenar Dear Departed.
Translated from the French
by Maria Louise Ascher.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 346 pages, $25

"When I was twenty," Marguerite Yourcenar once told an interviewer, "I sketched out the plan of a vast historical novel, which would have incorporated all the generations of my family, albeit in a manner highly

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transformed by my imagination." The novel was never written, but the preparatory study for one of its episodes led, decades later, to *The Abyss* (1968), that remarkable re-creation of the world of Renaissance Flanders which, together with the earlier *Memoirs of Hadrian*, proved the summit of Yourcenar's achievement. Composition of *The Abyss* occupied most of the author's middle age; upon its publication she found herself in a valedictory mood, ever more fascinated with the documents of her family history and again contemplating an *hommage* to her forebears. "When we are allowed the time," Yourcenar wrote, "there always comes a moment when we want to sum up our accounts, a moment when we all ask what it is we owe to various ancestors known or unknown, to various incidents or accidents long since forgotten"—that is, a moment when we begin to seek "the sources of the self." From this moment sprung the last of Yourcenar's major works, the trilogy she called *Le Labyrinthe du monde*, whose final volume was completed in 1987, the year of her death at the age of eighty-four.

The first of these volumes, *Souveniers pieux*, was published in France in 1974; it now appears in an austerely beautiful translation under Yourcenar's choice of an English title, *Dear Departed*. Its opening sentence echoes that of countless conventional autobiographies: "The being I refer to as *me* came into the world on Monday, June 8, 1903, at about eight in the morning, in Brussels." But this is no conventional autobiography, no conventional book of any kind. Instead of moving her story forward from her birth—first memories, first books, first loves—Yourcenar moves it backward, offering us a series of portraits of her mother and of others from several generations of her mother's family. (The story of her father and his family is told in a sequel, the yet-to-be-translated *Archives du Nord*.) Her mother is rediscovered in grainy photographs from her girlhood, in disastrous report cards from the Brussels School of the Sacred Heart, in tender letters to her husband-to-be, and in the doctor's report of her death: she died at the age of thirty-two, eleven days after giving birth to her only child, the author, Marguerite. Here, too, in their seemingly infinite variety of circumstance and temperament, are her mother's six brothers and sisters, their parents and aunts and uncles, their grandparents and great-grandparents. And here especially, in a tour-de-force double portrait, are her distinguished literary predecessor, cousin Octave Pirmez, an exquisite Belgian essayist of the later nineteenth century, and his brother Fernand, an idealist and pamphleteer, whose suicide at twenty-eight would haunt Octave to his own early grave.

"It goes without saying," Yourcenar writes of her study of her mother's family, "that I did not find the common denominators I sought between these people and me. The similarities I thought I discovered here and there unravel as soon as I try to define them precisely, ceasing to be anything other than likenesses such as those that link all creatures that have existed. I hasten to say, at this point, that the study of my father's family has brought me scarcely anything more in this regard. What survives, as always, is the infinite pity for the little that we are and, contradictorily, respect and curiosity for these fragile and complex structures, poised as if on pilings at the brink of the abyss." Another word for this, I believe, is "compassion," which Yourcenar defines elsewhere in this book as "the knifelike pain" that can only be felt by those who possess "the horrible gift of looking the world full in the face and seeing it as it is." Yourcenar's own gift of compassion—her unique combination of historical imagination and human sympathy, and her ability to suffer for those who have suffered before her—was, as her two great novels show, extraordinary. It is again evident on every page of *Dear Departed*, which brings us closer not only to the moving particulars of her and her family's past but to an understanding of something we all feel vaguely but only rarely apprehend: the presence of the whole of human history in the lives of each of us.

—Christopher Carduff

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Joseph Epstein The Goldin Boys. Norton, 221 pages, $19.95

There's this guy in Chicago, name Joe Epstein, grew up in West Rogers Park, went to Daniel Boone School, you know him? He could have managed a furniture store or sold insurance or become a liquor distributor. Instead, he did good for himself in academe, editing a fancy magazine called *The American Scholar* and writing a bunch of books about other guys' writing. You'd think he'd stick to highbrow stuff—instead, he wrote a book about furniture-store owners and street peddlers and loan sharks. Go figure. Or, as they say in Chicago, draw your own conclusions.

I don't know whether Mr. Epstein indeed attended Daniel Boone, but having read these stories of his (which originally appeared in *Commentary* and *The Hudson Review*), I feel as if I'd attended it along with his characters. I also feel that he could have done at least as well as his characters in any of the above-mentioned businesses. Mr. Epstein's is a world of middle-class Jewish *tzores* that is closer to Mordecai Richler's mean streets of Montreal than to Philip Roth's angst-ridden Newark. And, unlike his fellow Chicagoan Saul Bellow, Mr. Epstein tackles this world in a deliberately lowbrow manner, using a great deal of control to prevent each story from becoming overly clever or sophisticated.

One of Mr. Epstein's pet subjects is the contrast between the worlds of business and academe, and nowhere is it dealt with better than in "Kaplan's Big Deal," the story of Sheldon Kaplan's rise from mere shoe salesman to venture capitalist. Kaplan's recipe for success is simple: you listen to the buyer, you let him air his frustrations, you find out his flaws, you manipulate them—and then you close. This also applies to personal life: if everybody is an operator, women are more so, and all their efforts to make themselves indispensable in one's life are doomed. "Go close a closer," says Kaplan. Then one day he meets Françoise—a lecturer in comparative literature, of all things!—and her son Philippe, and it becomes the big deal of his life. It would be unfair to reveal the twists and turns of the plot, but the whole thing is hilarious and touching without being one bit sentimental: no mean feat in a love story of an elderly bachelor, a divorcée, and her young son.

Mr. Epstein shows a compassion for the Kaplans of this world—Resnik the furniture-store owner ("Low Anxiety"), Kravitz the odd-jobber, and Kravitz's most loyal customer, Schlifkin the peddler ("Schlifkin on My Books")—that is rare in contemporary writing. By contrast, he shows no mercy to writers Pinsker ("No Pulitzer for Pinsker") and Danzig ("Another Rare Visit with Noah Danzig") or to go-getting publisher Marshall Wexler ("Marshall Wexler's Brilliant Career"). One could hypothesize about the author's disgruntlement with the world of letters that he knows so well and his seeming preference for the world of business, which to him may be the road not taken. Or one could just sit back and enjoy the stories for what they are—funny, juicy, and far wiser than most things getting published these days.

—*David Gurevich*

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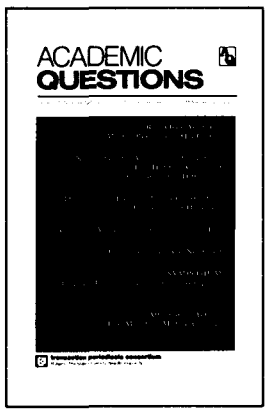

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Letters

"Poetry and the Free Market"

To the Editors:

Bruce Bawer ("Columbia's Assault on the American Novel," December 1991) might be less hysterical if he would reflect upon Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz's comments in "Poetry and the Free Market" (*The New York Times Book Review*, December 8, 1991). Bawer apparently cannot distinguish between Stalinist political terrorism and the benign and ancient socialist efforts to ameliorate the inevitable inequities of unregulated market forces.

As Paz writes,"Recently I have been recalling, not without sadness, the struggles that certain of us poets, writers and artists have waged for many years and in different countries. In my youth, the struggle against 'socialist realism,' a doctrine that subjected literature to the dictates of a state and a party that, in the name of the liberation of mankind, was erecting monuments to the whip and the boot. . . . Today literature and the arts are exposed to a different danger: they are threatened not by a doctrine or a political party but by a faceless, soulless and directionless economic process. The market is circular, impersonal, impartial, inflexible. Some will tell me that this is as it should be. Perhaps. But the market, blind and deaf, is not fond of literature or of risk, and it does not know how to choose. Its censorship is not ideological: it has no ideas. It knows all about prices and nothing about values."

Bawer might grasp these fundamental and crucial distinctions if he were to study freshman economics and discover how the price market system only responds to cash-backed demand, is indifferent to external costs and external benefits. Bawer might be relieved to find that our social-security system, no doubt Marxist by his reading, was critical to the survival of the USA's capitalist order in the mid-twentieth century and has allowed American freedom and prosperity to flourish and triumph. Social democracy hasn't fostered revolution and tyranny, but the logical outcome of Bawer's frenzied oversimplifications just might.

Edward T. Chase
Senior Editor
Charles Scribner's Sons
New York, NY

Bruce Bawer replies:

I am grieved by this curious and condescending letter from Mr. Chase, whom I have always respected. It is an example of a familiar epistolary subgenre: namely, the kind of missive that criticizes an author for saying things he didn't say about a subject he wasn't addressing.

My essay in the December issue was not about economics. It was about a supposed work of literary history most of whose thirty-odd authors measure novels according to a single crude, narrow set of political standards and take a chillingly authoritarian stance toward works that fail to meet those standards. There is nothing "benign"—to use Mr. Chase's word—about *The Columbia History of the American Novel*. On the contrary, it is a deeply malignant book, one whose authors explicitly align themselves not

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with anything that might honestly be described as "social democracy" but with the extreme view that American society's only hope of salvation lies in Marxist revolution, in the renunciation of democratic values, and in the denial of individuality. Indeed, these authors routinely distinguish between the kind of democratic reform that they revile and that Mr. Chase presumably esteems (and on which he and I might well agree in many particulars) and the wholesale Marxist revolution in which they claim to believe. (That most of them are probably not sincere revolutionaries but, rather, hypocritical professors riding a souped-up bandwagon down the academic fast lane doesn't make their declarations of support for Marxist revolution any less offensive.)

Given the history of such revolutions, the terrible consequences of which we have been privileged to see unravel in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, I couldn't help finding this book's radical rhetoric deeply disturbing. It is absurd of Mr. Chase to suggest that because I was riled by this rhetoric—and by Columbia University Press's decision to publish several hundred pages of it in the guise of literary history—I am, *ipso facto*, an enemy of social security. What kind of logic is this? (Talk about oversimplification!) Nor can I begin to understand Mr. Chase's apparent impression that my essay either denied the value of inquiry into the impact of market forces on culture or suggested that literature and the arts don't have a rough time of it in the free market. As I made very clear in my essay, my objection to the *Columbia* authors in this regard was that, far from having anything new or illuminating to say about the marketplace, they merely reiterated party-line formulas about its evils—and seemed to think that these formulas constituted literary criticism.

Mr. Chase snidely describes the tone of my essay as "hysterical" and "frenzied." But I won't apologize for the fact that the vision of millions of students being taught out of this fatuous and irresponsible book roused my ire. Nor will I apologize for stating passionately and in no uncertain terms that I find it preferable—and, indeed, consider myself blessed—to live under a system that neglects the artist instead of imprisoning or executing him, a system that, for all its flaws, allows one to disagree with one's government in print and in the comfort of one's home rather than in a gulag. It is supremely ironic to me that Mr. Chase, whose elegant Park Avenue apartment has always struck me as the apotheosis of capitalistic luxury, should fail to grasp these vital distinctions.

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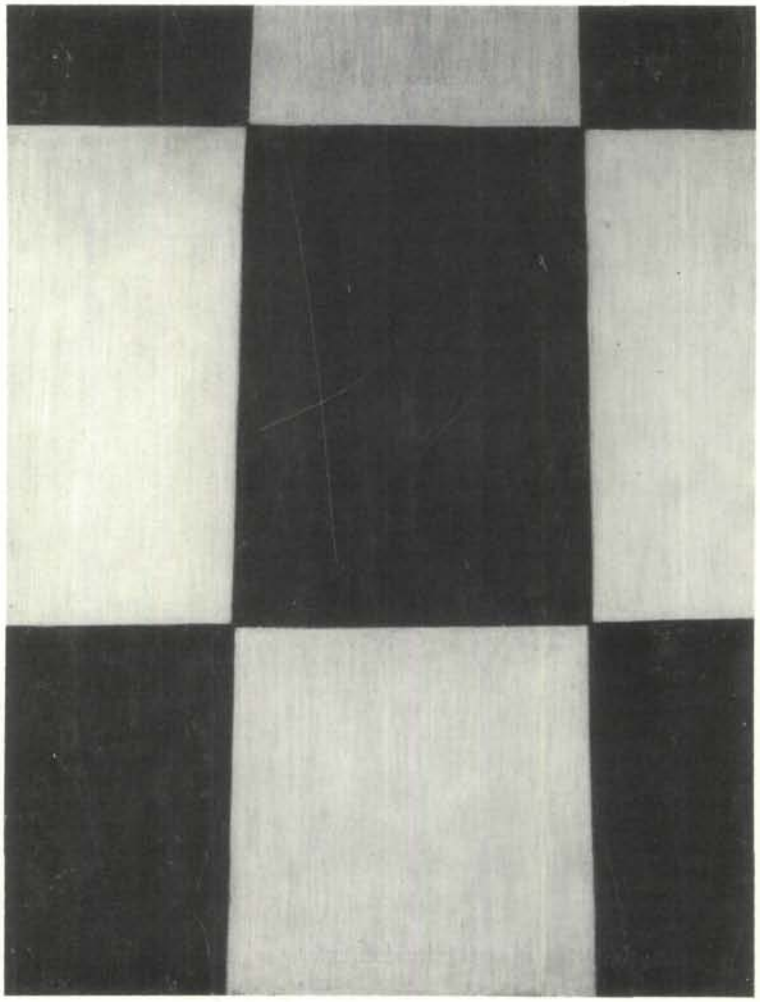

Myron Stout, Untitled, ca. 1950-1980, charcoal and pastel on paper, 25 x 19 inches.

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